



March 30, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. President, Leader McConnell & Speaker Pelosi:

Our two organizations represent thousands of local news publishers across the United States. These publishers are on the absolute front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, providing their communities with critical news and information about health, welfare and safety. When people want to know about local outbreaks, the location of testing sites or what arrangements are being made for education, local news is often the only place where they can get reliable information. And many of our members are providing this information outside of paywalls, without any expectation of financial return.

Unfortunately, many local news publishers are now facing an existential crisis of their own. In particular, the rapid contraction of advertising markets is dealing a brutal blow to an industry where business models were already deeply difficult. While many publishers have seen increases in online traffic and digital subscriptions, the additional revenue has in no way made-up for the sharp losses in ad revenue. The News Media Alliance has often made the case that the online environment, generally, does not adequately reward the production and distribution of quality journalism. While that is bad in every circumstance, in the current environment it could prove fatal -- both to publishers and the public.

As we move into a continuing phase of this crisis, we will be engaging with elected representatives in a discussion of options for actions the federal government could take to help sustain our local news ecosystem. Obviously, independent journalism and government action have an inherent and necessary tension, and we should look for solutions that maintain a separation of interests. But we also all have a mutual need to sustain local news publishing so that it can collectively get us through this crisis ... and the next one.

David Chavern
President & CEO
News Media Alliance

H. Dean Ridings
CEO
America's Newspapers

cc: Members, United States Senate
Members, United States House of Representatives