

January 26, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

At the opening session of the Summit for Democracy, you stated that local journalism is “how the public stay informed and how governments are held accountable.” The thousands of diverse publishers and other stakeholders represented by our organizations agree. High-quality, local journalism is indeed the “[bedrock of democracy](#).”

On February 7, when you deliver your State of the Union address, we ask that you highlight the importance of a strong free press. When you report to the Joint Session of Congress and the American people, you will undoubtedly remind us of America’s strengths in the face of significant challenges at home and abroad. While America has long been a beacon of light when it comes to freedom of the press, that light has grown dimmer due to the monopolistic shadow of the Big Tech giants. The largest tech platforms dominate revenue streams online, with Google and Facebook in control of an [estimated 60 to 70 percent](#) of digital ad markets. These anticompetitive behaviors are further highlighted in the Justice Department’s recently filed lawsuit against Google, which alleges monopoly abuse by the company in the online advertising market.

To stop that light from going out and allow America’s free press to continue to contribute to our nation’s resilience and serve as a model of democracy to the world, we need bipartisan action from Congress. The local news outlets we represent and others that prioritize a free press ask that you use your State of the Union address to call on the House and Senate to urgently advance key legislation to your desk that will help save local journalism.

News publishers are facing an accelerating, existential financial crisis. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Service Annual Survey, newspaper publisher revenue dropped by [52 percent](#) between 2002 and 2020. From 2004 to 2018, communities across the nation [lost 1,800 newspapers](#). Despite intense public interest in developing stories about COVID-19 leading to increased traffic to news sites, newsrooms continue to close at an alarming rate. By 2025, it is estimated that [one-third](#) of the newspapers that were in operation twenty years ago will be gone.

The closing of legacy local newsrooms has a cascading effect across the communities they serve. Once local news sources vanish from a community, the resulting “news deserts” become

increasingly susceptible to corruption in government and in business; misinformation and disinformation spreads unchecked; and [voter participation and civic engagement recede](#).

We are deeply thankful for the serious attention and hard work that you and your Administration have paid to these important issues and we greatly appreciate the economy-wide approach to promoting competition you have directed by executive order, where you acknowledged the connection between Big Tech dominance and imperiled news organizations.

In your State of the Union address, we respectfully ask that you highlight local journalism that strengthens our democracy, informs our communities, enriches our lives, and empowers our citizens. We ask that you offer your strongest support for and endorsement of the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, legislation to give small, local news outlets the ability to negotiate on a more level playing field with Big Tech platforms for a fairer deal for use of their content. We also ask that you call on Congress to pass the Local Journalism Sustainability Act, containing reforms that will incentivize investments in local journalism through the tax code. These bipartisan proposals will support high-quality journalism at the core of our First Amendment ideals.

We know you understand and appreciate the tireless work and brave sacrifices of American journalists at home and around the world – the work they do is priceless and comes at a tremendous cost. High-quality journalism should not be taken for granted or exploited by free-riding platforms.

While news publishers have made important strides in innovation, development of new revenue streams, and streamlining of operations, they cannot survive alone. Currently, Big Tech exerts its monopoly power to control much of the distribution of news content online and undercuts – or avoids entirely – fair payment to news outlets. As a nation, we cannot allow the bedrock of our democracy to be ground to dust in the digital economy. There is no better opportunity to make the case for saving local journalism than when you answer your constitutional call to report to the Congress on the State of the Union.

Thank you for your consideration and your ongoing support for the Americans who are working hard to publish high-quality journalism across the country – journalism that fulfills the promise of our First Amendment freedoms.

Sincerely,

News/Media Alliance
National Newspaper Association
America's Newspapers

Authors Guild
American Economic Liberties Project
Inter American Press Association
Radio Television Digital News Association