



Florida Press Association

336 E. College Ave., Suite 304

Tallahassee, FL 32301

www.flpress.com

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
via email

Dear Governor DeSantis,

I am writing on behalf of the Florida Press Association, founded in 1879, and representing the daily and weekly newspapers in Florida. We appreciate and thank you for your response to one of the worst pandemics our country has experienced in more than a century. These are challenging times and we appreciate the advice, guidance and composure you have conveyed to the people of Florida.

As you know, our members represent the print and digital media and work closely with government officials to keep the public accurately informed during times of emergency, and we would like that critical work to continue unabated during the COVID-19 crisis.

If there is a need to mandate business shutdowns or shelter-in-place programs within Florida, we ask that the government recognize news publishing and reporting as “essential” to public health and welfare, and thus exempt from any business shutdown mandate. We think this would also be consistent with the section 252.33(2) F.S. limitations on emergency management operations.

Media organizations are essential businesses to remain open during the COVID-19 crisis in order to continue to inform the public about their health, safety and welfare and convey accurate, reliable and critical information at a time of great need. If a mandatory business closure or shelter-in-place restriction were to be effected and media were not exempted, that would not only severely block that essential conduit but also put thousands of citizens, especially our seniors, at risk who rely on the traditional print and broadcast outlets for their news.

Our printed newspapers have millions of readers who rely on us as a lifeline to the community in times like this. Additionally, our ability to publish digitally extends our reach far beyond our paid readership as most, if not all, of our members have taken down paywalls for COVID-related content so that readers can obtain critical health and local response information during this crisis.

We are heartened that, so far, newspapers have been identified as essential businesses and granted exemptions in San Francisco, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and in other state and local jurisdictions.

We look forward to working with your office on this issue as our members strive to serve the citizens of Florida during this unprecedented time. Thank you.



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Respectfully,

Sandi Kemp

Chair, Florida Press Association

Publisher, Navarre Press

cc: Jared Moskowitz, Director, Division of Emergency Management

Joe Jacquot, General Counsel, Office of the Governor.

Jim Fogler, Pres. and Executive Director, FPA

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