

Los Angeles Times | The San Diego Union-Tribune

Chris Argentieri

President & Chief Operating Officer

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Chair, Amy Klobuchar (MN)
Ranking Member, Mike Lee (UT)
United States Senate
Subcommittee on Competition Policy, Antitrust, and Consumer Rights
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

VIA EMAIL

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Times and San Diego Union-Tribune, we write to support enactment of the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act (S. 673) and appreciate you giving the proposed legislation a full and fair hearing.

From its inception, the United States has led the world in policies that support a liberal democracy and a free press. Without this type of legislation, we will fall behind many other democracies around the world. Australia, Canada and France have enacted or are considering similar legislation to address this very issue.

Google and Facebook have gained billions of dollars in advertising revenue by featuring news content that they did not pay to create. A significant portion has come directly at our expense, forcing us to move away from the ad-supported business which had operated successfully for more than a century. While they are legally obligated to compensate book and music publishers, and film and TV studios, no such mechanism exists for paying news publishers. With S. 673, we are asking for a temporary safe harbor from antitrust laws so that we can collectively negotiate terms on which the dominant online platforms may distribute our online content.

In the last decade, California has lost nearly 150 newspapers, more than any other state in the country. Decimation of news sources does not discriminate and is widely distributed throughout the state. When local newspapers fold, civic engagement goes down, corruption goes up and the ability to combat disinformation erodes further. It's damaging to these communities, and to democracy.

The antitrust safe harbor envisioned by S. 673 is limited in time and scope, and it provides the time needed to correct the competitive imbalance that our existing antitrust laws are unable to address. It would allow for the development of a pro-competitive, business-led solution that will help the Los Angeles Times and San Diego Union-Tribune earn their fair share of subscription and advertising dollars for their original content – and preserve and create jobs for the people who produce it. It also is a step toward ensuring the survival of local journalism and preventing the spread of “news deserts” where access to trustworthy news may be dangerously diminished at precisely the moment in history when it is most needed.

We belong to the California News Publishers Association and News Media Alliance, which also strongly favor S. 673. We ask that you make note of our support in the record and call upon us should you need any information about why we believe this legislation is essential to the survival of news publishers and to the high-quality journalism that is the backbone of a healthy and vibrant democracy.

Sincerely,

Chris Argentieri