



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

On behalf of the over 300 Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association members, 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 thus far.

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. With that in mind, we would like you to further clarify the definition of “nonessential businesses” under the current disaster declaration as well as any future statewide declarations dealing with business closures. Print and digital media are not mentioned in the directive issued by the Department of Community and Economic Development yesterday, and we would appreciate a clarification that 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.

Our members have been defined as “critical emergency services” and exempt from restrictions on business and individuals by other disaster policies such as PEMA Directive 2008-1. The designation of the media as a “critical emergency service” or “essential service” is necessary and appropriate considering the importance of the press’ constitutional role, especially during times of emergency. Local news publishers are carrying out an essential function in conveying accurate, reliable and critical information to the public at a time of great need.

We would like to confirm that media organizations are considered “essential services” exempt from business closures during the current disaster so that the media and their representatives can freely gather news and report to the public without fear of violating government restrictions on businesses and individuals. Furthermore, we ask that this designation would continue if any further action to limit commercial activity is deemed necessary by your administration.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Simpson".

Brad Simpson
President
Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association

cc: David Padfield, Executive Director, PEMA
Dennis M. Davin, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
Mike Brunelle, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Lyndsay Kensinger, Press Secretary, Office of the Governor