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**Fund Local Journalism to Help Communities
Dean Ridings
CEO, America's Newspapers**

A portion of the Local Journalism Sustainability Act (LJSA) was included in the recent Build Back Better bill that was passed in the House. The LJSA, which has bipartisan support in the House, provides needed support for local journalists across the U.S. and is now being considered in the Senate.

While there has been tremendous support for the LJSA overall, there have been some pundits who have questioned whether government support for local journalists will maintain a free press. One such claim recently came from The Wall Street Journal in an opinion piece asserting the LJSA is “a subsidy for local journalists, most of whom are left of center.” It’s important for local newspaper readers to understand this claim is not only misleading but is also incorrect. While the writers at The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times may be interested in demonstrating how right or left of center they are, most journalists at local newspapers are dedicated to the news of their community without a slant in either direction.

One of the reasons the LJSA has gained so much support is the focus on protecting local journalism. The LJSA is designed to help local journalists in local communities and not the national media. Outlets such as The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Huffington Post, CNN, Fox and others won’t qualify for support as they have too many employees or don’t produce local news. The creation and consumption of local news is different than national news, and according to a 2019 Knight-Gallup study, more people believe their local news organizations are accomplishing most of the key tasks of informing their communities, significantly higher than national outlets. Without a local news organization, where else can a community get information about their local school board, the mayor’s race and other important components of community life?

The LJSA also provides even the smallest newspapers with a bridge to continue their digital evolution. Most local newspapers receive no compensation from Big Tech companies such as Facebook or Google for use of their content. While The Wall Street Journal may be able to negotiate a deal with Google to be paid for use of its content, most small newspapers don’t have that option, and they are challenged to find the resources to provide the news that is critically needed by their communities. This additional resource will provide the local news industry time to continue its transition to a more digital future and to work out a better arrangement either through legislation or other means to be paid when Google and Facebook use their content.

The LJSA is also not a permanent handout for the industry. It’s a tax credit that sunsets in five years and is structured to incentivize all local news organizations to retain and even hire more journalists to cover their communities. While some hedge-fund owned newspaper companies and other major corporations will benefit from the tax credits, the real winners will be the communities they serve. For the thousands of small independently-owned newspapers across the U.S., particularly in rural communities without other viable news sources, the LJSA will mean that they have a much better chance of staying afloat.

We strongly encourage the Senate to support the elements of the LJSA in the Build Back Better bill. We are appreciative of Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and the many co-sponsors of this bill who understand how important it is for all communities to have a strong local news voice; when it is lost, everyone loses.

And that has no slant to the right or to the left.

*On behalf of its approximately 1,600 newspaper and associate member companies, America’s Newspapers is committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life. We put an emphasis on educating the public on all the ways newspapers contribute to building a community identity and the success of local businesses. Learn more:* [*www.newspapers.org*](http://www.newspapers.org)

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