



May 5, 2020

Dear Paul Bascobert, Mike Reed, Maribel Perez Wadsworth and Samantha Howland:

Our primary mission as journalists is to bring important news to our readers in ways that enrich and empower our communities. Our readers rely on us to provide quality reporting that is thoroughly researched and fact-checked before it goes to press. We pride ourselves on upholding these standards.

That is why it's so startling that top executives at Gannett, the country's largest newspaper chain, are consistently lying in public and on the record.

We call on Maribel Wadsworth, president of Gannett's USA Today Network, to stop lying and stop disenfranchising her employees.

Over 150 journalists at five Gannett publications around the country are demanding that Gannett stop stonewalling their union elections. Their scheduled on-site elections were canceled by the National Labor Relations Board in mid-March due to safety concerns over the coronavirus.

Unlike every other media company facing a union drive, Gannett is unique in refusing to agree to a mail ballot election, an obvious and safe alternative when on-site elections are not feasible. Meanwhile, successful mail ballot elections have recently taken place for newspapers under McClatchy, Lee Enterprises, and Tribune Publishing.

In spite of nearly half a dozen successful examples of mail ballot votes happening in real time, Gannett says they can't agree to a mail ballot vote because they're not sure how they would work.

Gannett has not only denied democracy through delay, they've verbally attacked their own employees for making the simple and obvious assertion that they can easily agree to a mail ballot at any time. A March 16th email to employees read "It's disappointing to see journalists, who above all value accuracy, are peddling these false claims."

Meanwhile, Gannett has filed three motions with the NLRB in [opposition to mail ballots](#).

While Gannett's journalists work tirelessly to provide accurate information to our readers, their bosses are lying to them. They're lying to their readers. They're lying to fellow journalists who are shining a light on their behavior.

Most recently, Maribel Wadsworth told both [CNN](#) and [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) this matter: "We did not and do not oppose a mail-in election in these unprecedented circumstances." That is simply not true.

Gannett's behavior doesn't meet the basic standards that working journalists must meet. It insults our profession and degrades our work at a time when people need to trust in their media institutions more than ever.

We as journalists are under attack by those who call us liars and question the quality of our work. It's a shame that journalists are also under attack by the leadership of their very own news organization.

Gannett's leadership needs to stop lying now and respect journalists' right to organize and form unions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Schleuss". The signature is stylized with a large loop and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Schleuss
President
The NewsGuild-CWA