



THE NEWSGUILD – CWA

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January 15, 2021

Randall R. Smith, Director
Tribune Publishing LLC
160 North Stetson Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

RE: Support for the U.S. Constitution and Affirmation of the First Amendment

Dear Mr. Smith:

You and your wife gave \$100,000 to the Trump Victory Fund in August 2019.¹ You have given financial support to political figures who have attempted to subvert the Constitution and routinely disparage the news media.

On behalf of The NewsGuild-CWA, Tribune Publishing and MediaNews Group employees, communities who depend on Tribune Publishing and MNG news outlets, and Tribune Publishing investors, I ask that you issue a public statement that:

1. apologizes for your support for Donald Trump;
2. denounces the recent assault on our Constitution by the supporters of President Trump;
3. condemns the president himself for inciting that assault; and
4. deplors the attack on journalism perpetuated by the rioters and articulated hundreds of times by the president.

This statement should be distributed to employees of both Tribune Publishing and MediaNews Group, of which Alden Global Capital is the controlling owner.

The events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, were horrific. A crowd of rioters, some armed, stormed the building, destroyed property, occupied offices and entered both the Senate and House chambers, forcing legislators and staff to flee for their lives. Pipe bombs were planted (and fortunately defused). Five people died as result; many were injured. These perpetrators were intent on subverting the constitutional process of counting electoral votes.

Not only did the mob attack an institution of American democracy, it attacked journalists. The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker recorded 14 assaults on journalists during the disturbance.² “Murder the Media” was

¹ Julie Reynolds, “Alden Owner Now Deeply in Trump’s Camp Now,” February 4, 2020:

<https://dfmworkers.org/alden-owner-is-deeply-in-trumps-camp-now/>

² Monty Tayloe, “Inauguration Concerns: Capitol Attack Could Renew Interest in Journalist Protection Law,” *Communications Daily*, January 13, 2021: <https://communicationsdaily.com/news/2021/01/13/Capitol-Attack-Could-Renew-Interest-in-Journalist-Protection-Law-2101120061>

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scrawled on a door to the Capitol. Rioters spat on journalists and destroyed their gear. Several reporters were injured.

For weeks after the November 3 presidential election, President Trump urged his supporters to descend on Washington, D.C., to “stop the steal.” Minutes before the seditious assault on the symbol of American democracy and the attacks on journalists, President Trump gave a speech full of lies and called on his supporters to go to the Capitol building. “You have to show strength,” he told the mob. During the riot, the mob called out “Hang Mike Pence.” The president and many of his supporters threatened the peaceful transfer of power.

President Trump has endangered journalists, calling them the “enemy of the people.” He regularly uses the phrase “fake news” to undermine factual reporting he disagrees with. Indeed, *The Independent* claims he has used the phrase 2,000 times.³ The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker has counted nearly 24,500 anti-media tweets since June 15, 2015.⁴ He has slammed virtually every news outlet that writes stories not to his liking or that criticizes him, his family, his friends, or his allies.

Alden Global Capital has transmitted a letter of intent to the board of Tribune Publishing to buy the company. Alden is the controlling owner of MediaNews Group and has stakes in Gannett and Lee Enterprises. As both a director at Tribune and as an investor in news, you have a responsibility to affirm your support for free and independent journalism. Yet, you and your wife made that \$100,000 donation wife three years into President Trump’s assault on journalism.

Reporters at Tribune and MNG have received Pulitzer Prizes, George Polk Prizes, the Society of Professional Journalists Prizes, and Investigative Reporters & Editors awards for their high quality journalism. Staying silent at this historical moment disrespects those who have worked so hard to present independent, fact-based journalism.

My request is not about partisanship nor is it about your right to support the political candidates to whom you have donated. It is about support for the Constitution and our democracy. You need to retract your support for a president who incited the insurrection on January 6, 2021, and assure your employees, the communities that depend on MNG and Tribune papers, and Tribune investors that you believe in the U.S. Constitution, our democracy, and the freedom of the press.

Sincerely,



Jon Schleuss
President

CC: Tribune Publishing Board of Directors

³ Alex Woodward, “Fake news’: A guide to Trump’s favourite phrase – and the dangers it obscures,” *The Independent*, October 2, 2020: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election/trump-fake-news-counter-history-b732873.html>

⁴ U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, “The Last Trump Tweet Against the Media,” January 11, 2021: <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/blog/last-trump-tweet-against-media/>