



The Unions of Lee Enterprises

STATEMENT

June 28, 2023 – The Unions of Lee Enterprises condemn the Iowa-based chain’s efforts to reduce most of its 77 daily newspapers’ print schedules to three days a week. This is another example of short-sighted cuts and a lack of investment in local journalism – the main product that supports the company and its investors.

Starting last week, Lee began cutting newspaper delivery to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays through the U.S. Postal Service.

Meanwhile, larger papers that represent the company’s biggest profit makers continue to see their news operations outsourced, consolidated and shrunk, leaving fewer employees providing and delivering timely news to the communities they serve. The Unions of Lee Enterprises is aware of more than 70 positions, union and nonunion, vacated and/or abolished since the beginning of the year at the dozen union papers it represents.

Lee Enterprises has said the printing day cuts will be a positive change, claiming it will allow reporters to focus on writing the best stories and go in-depth on issues, rather than editors scrambling to fill pages each day with national or regional content.

We find it hard to believe these papers will have the quality “Sunday feel” Lee wants after the company cut dozens of newsroom staff members at the 12 unionized newspapers of Lee. That doesn’t include numerous damaging cuts in other departments or at non-unionized papers nationwide.

The three-day-a-week model has not been clearly laid out for newsroom employees who are expected to implement it. Neither has it been accurately communicated with readers and subscribers. Lee marketing claims that readers will be offered “expanded coverage” under the new model are fundamentally dishonest. The entire process feels ill-conceived and rushed.

On the digital news delivery side, Lee has touted its growth in digital-only subscribers, but how many of those are readers who gave up on receiving a print edition as the company hikes prices and makes cuts to the product? That switch isn’t a net gain.

The website template all Lee papers are required to use makes local news hard to find. The websites and social media pages are crowded with nationally syndicated content, burying the local news that readers come to us for. Expecting readers to keep paying the same price or more for less local journalism is an insult to their intelligence.

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To gain and attract new digital subscribers, Lee needs to focus on making local news more accessible.

Across all Lee news organizations, large and small, customer service has been downsized and outsourced overseas. It's common for newsroom staff to hear from exasperated readers unable to reach someone to help them.

Lee has been moving the print operations at many papers – including one of its largest, The Buffalo News – farther from where they are written. Combining that change with the less-frequent editions will make it tougher to get timely sports results and late-breaking stories into the print versions of the paper.

None of these drastic cuts will serve the company, its investors, its readers or its employees in the long term. We will simply lose the subscribers and advertisers we need to survive. No company can expect to achieve a strong return on investment when it isn't making an investment in its product or its people.

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The **Unions of Lee Enterprises** represents all unionized NewsGuild members at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch; The Buffalo News; the Omaha World-Herald; the Richmond Times-Dispatch; the Roanoke Times; the Billings Gazette; the Casper Star-Tribune; the Sioux City Journal; the Charlottesville Daily Progress; the Kenosha News; The Daily News in Longview, Wash.; and the Southern Illinoisan. Follow the Unions of Lee Enterprises on Twitter [@LeeUnions](https://twitter.com/LeeUnions).

Lee Enterprises is a media chain based in Davenport, Iowa. It owns daily newspapers, as well as nearly 350 weekly and specialty publications in 26 states, according to its website.