



THE NEWSGUILD

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January 26, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your steadfast support of America's union journalists. We write to urge Congress to include provisions from the Community News & Small Business Support Act in a final tax reform package and to urgently convene hearings on the growing crisis of local news deserts across the country.

A strong democracy depends on an informed and educated citizenry. For 247 years, the United States upheld the belief in a fourth estate, enshrining the right to a free press in the U.S. Constitution to inform the American public, hold our government accountable and keep our communities connected through quality local news written by brave journalists.

However, the United States has lost almost two-thirds of its newspaper journalists—43,000 since 2005. Local newsrooms from New York to rural South Arkansas are being hollowed out, causing news deserts, communities with little to no local news outlets. Research links news deserts to increasing political polarization, corruption and other threats to our communities and our democracy.

In just the past two weeks news companies announced plans to lay off hundreds of journalists at the Los Angeles Times, Business Insider, Sports Illustrated, TIME magazine, Pitchfork and Condé Nast.

To protect democracy and our communities, Congress must take urgent action to address the dire state of local news decline by:

1. **Including provisions from the Community News & Small Business Support Act (H.R. 4756) in the upcoming tax reform package.** This bill provides tax credits for hiring and retaining local journalists. These provisions would ensure local newsrooms could adequately staff up and help reverse the decline in local news jobs and news coverage across the country.
2. **Immediately convening hearings about the state of local news featuring working journalists.** There are 204 U.S. counties that are news deserts and another 228 counties are at substantial risk of becoming news deserts, according to research from

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the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. If the current rate holds, by the end of next year, our country will have lost a third of its newspapers since 2005. Hearings on this growing crisis to our democracy are a critical step in building awareness and educating Americans about the importance of reversing the decline in local news.

Journalists across the United States are organizing to fight back against the decline in local news alongside our communities to ensure we can continue delivering the news our communities deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jon Schleuss
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