

Matt Pearce, President, Media Guild of the West  
*Testimony for the California Journalism Preservation Act, Assembly Bill 886*  
**California Senate Judiciary Committee, June 25, 2024**

Good afternoon. My name is Matt Pearce, and I am president of Media Guild of the West, a local union of The NewsGuild-CWA that represents journalists across Southern California.<sup>1</sup>

I'm here on behalf of the many journalism unions supporting this bill, which include Pacific Media Workers Guild; our parent union The NewsGuild; SAG-AFTRA; NABET-CWA; and the National Writers Union.

We're also supported by the California Labor Federation and Communications Workers of America District 9.

Together, we represent thousands of journalists and media workers who provide news and essential information for millions of Californians.<sup>2</sup>

Until a few months ago, I was a longtime reporter for the Los Angeles Times.

Then, over the past year, I negotiated the layoffs of 150 of my coworkers before taking a buyout myself – the equivalent of the entire CalMatters staff disappearing, twice over.<sup>3 4</sup>

I'm here today because most of the local journalism jobs that disappear in our state every year, including mine, are never coming back.

That's because the economic foundations of digital journalism are fundamentally broken.

Our unions support Assembly Bill 886 because trillion-dollar monopoly platforms are strip-mining our civic institutions, stealing our labor, and destroying the open internet for the sake of short-term profits.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.mediaguildwest.org/who-we-are>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.mediaguildwest.org/news/cjpa-labor-support-letter-2024>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2023-06-07/los-angeles-times-newsroom-layoffs-merida-soon-shiong>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2024-01-23/latimes-layoffs-115-newsroom-soon-shiong>

It's not just the legacy newspapers.

Audience numbers at nonprofit news outlets nationally have reportedly dropped by a third on average since 2022.<sup>5</sup>

Our public media colleagues at LAist (KPCC),<sup>6</sup> KCRW,<sup>7</sup> KQED<sup>8</sup> and CapRadio<sup>9</sup> have faced major cuts over the past year alone.

Innovative digital outlets are hitting a wall.

In my home county, the news site dot.LA, which covered local businesses, shut down last year.<sup>10</sup>

The independent news site L.A. Taco recently furloughed its staff after it couldn't make payroll.<sup>11</sup>

The Long Beach Post gutted its newsroom despite converting from for-profit to nonprofit status to attract philanthropy.<sup>12</sup>

If these trends continue, we are headed toward high noon for voter apathy and government corruption.

Whenever one of you takes an ugly vote, AI is never going to chase you down that hallway like Ashley Zavala.

That's because there's no such thing as local journalism without local journalists. And that's why I respectfully ask you to vote yes on Assembly Bill 886.

Thank you.

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<sup>5</sup><https://inn.org/research/inn-index/the-inn-index/audience-distribution/>

<sup>6</sup><https://laist.com/news/scpr-to-cut-more-than-10-of-staff-positions-ceo-cites-budget-shortfall>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2023-12-08/kcrw-staff-cuts-to-close-3-million-deficit>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.kqed.org/news/11987509/kqed-cuts-34-positions-amid-budget-shortfall>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.capradio.org/articles/2023/09/01/capradio-lays-off-12-of-staff-cancels-music-programs-amid-financial-issues/>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.thewrap.com/dot-la-sacks-entire-editorial-staff-ceo-sam-adams/>

<sup>11</sup><https://lataco.com/facing-immediate-layoffs-l-a-taco-launches-membership-drive-to-save-our-publication>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2024-03-22/long-beach-post-layoffs-strike>