The Importance of Local News
Why an investment in community news is an investment in our nation’s well-being

Billions of dollars in relief funding are being distributed to industries most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, with a focus on protecting the economic health of our nation and its communities. However, more help is needed for those committed to keeping the public informed with critical information: locally-owned and nonprofit community news.

Here’s why we can’t afford to leave them behind.

In Local News We Trust

¾ of Americans trust their local TV news and local newspapers

62% of Americans are looking to local news on how to protect themselves from being infected by the virus.

More people across the political spectrum have more trust in their local newspapers over national newspapers.¹

Local Newspapers: 73%
National Newspapers: 59%

The State of Local News

Local news was already at risk when coronavirus hit, but we’re now being faced with destruction of local news—at a time when it is needed most. Amid the public health crisis, many communities across the U.S. suffer from a lack of local reporting.

Employment in the newspaper industry has fallen just as much as the coal mining industry.²

60% of counties that have reported cases of COVID-19 lack a daily newspaper.⁴

Local News, Grounded in Community

Local news cannot be only the province of a handful of big companies owning newspaper chains and station groups. We also need to support more than 3,000 locally-owned or nonprofit news organizations including:

- Local nonprofit websites
- Weekly newspapers
- Public radio
- Ethnic news organizations
- Rural papers
- Family-owned dailies

Coverage Worth Protecting

News providers have been classified as essential organizations.⁵ Every day, thousands of locally-owned and nonprofit news teams deliver original reporting to millions of Americans from the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, including information on how to keep families safe:

- Learn where to access food while schools are closed
- Access resources that can help parents of school-age children.
- Access free internet service so their kids can now learn remotely.
- Obtain testing locations and community-specific public health information
- Track the actions of local elected leaders who are working to keep residents safe.

The Cost of Doing Nothing

If we don’t act to support locally-owned and nonprofit news, we will face:

- Less voting and other forms of civic engagement⁶
- Greater polarization¹
- Increased government waste⁸
- More difficulty in tracking diseases⁹
- More toxic emissions¹⁰

Invest in Local News

An investment in locally-owned and nonprofit newsrooms is an investment in our nation’s public health. Support locally-owned and nonprofit newsrooms.

Sources:
1. Survey Says Good News, Pew Research Center
2. Attitudes About Local News Mostly Stable Amid Covid-19, Reuters
3. How Covid-19 has hit local newsrooms hard, MIT Media Lab
5. Civic Engagement Strongly Tied to Local News Habits, Pew Research Center
6. Political polarization increases after local newspapers close
7. When towns lose their newspapers, disease detectives are left flying blind
8. The Impact of Newspaper Closures on Public Finance
9. Press and leaks: Do newspapers reduce toxic emissions?
10. Employment in the newspaper industry has fallen just as much as the coal mining industry.