

OTHER VIEWS

Access to trustworthy information is critical at this time of crisis

During this coronavirus pandemic, access to accurate and trustworthy information in your community is as critical to life under quarantine and as sought after as hand sanitizer and face masks.

Your local newspaper provides the news and information unique to your community.

Where are the testing sites and who’s eligible, which businesses are open, what is the local online unemployment benefit application process, and much more. But your access to local news and information is gravely threatened by the economic carnage COVID-19 has wrought.



DEAN RIDINGS
CEO, AMERICA'S
NEWSPAPERS

While local newspapers continue to field reporters and bring news and advice from public health authorities in print and online — at considerable cost — their revenues have all but disappeared as the businesses that were their most important advertisers were shuttered.

That’s why America’s Newspapers and other organizations representing local news providers are asking Congress to take urgent action to ensure you don’t lose your vital sources of timely and trustworthy information.

First, we’re asking that Congress expand and clarify the Payroll Protection Program to ensure it covers all local newspapers and news broadcasters.

While some of these outlets may be owned by large organizations, they must survive on their own. It’s only fair that they should be included in any expansion of the program. These loans will keep the newspaper employees — your neighbors — on their payrolls and help get the news to you in print as well as online.

We appreciate the bipartisan letter of April 19 from U.S. Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), John Kennedy (R-LA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Boozman (R-AR) that requested waiving the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) affiliation rule to allow local media outlets to access funding, pointing to the critical role these outlets play in keeping communities healthy and informed.

Second, we are asking that the Trump Administration direct current federal government advertising funds to local news and media outlets. These public service and informative ads could be similar to the ones running right now about the U.S. Census. They could carry critical government information about data from the CDC, access to small business loans, medical resources for families and other important topics. We’re asking for a commitment that would be spent in an equitable manner across all local news providers.

We also believe that there should be an immediate relief package that is based on total newsroom employees. Some local news organizations won’t survive without some type of immediate grant or infusion that is tied to the organization’s employees who directly work in the newsroom.

This is not a demand for an industry bailout by local news providers. Instead, these measures recognize that local news publishers are on the information front line of the coronavirus pandemic, providing a public service vital to keeping our communities safe, secure and sustained during this unprecedented public health crisis.

Please contact the offices of your senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress and tell them you support expanding the Payroll Protection Program to include your local news source and that the federal government should use your local newspapers or news broadcaster to convey important information through public service ads. And finally, let them know that a grant based on newsroom employees is critical at this time. Visit www.usa.gov/elect-ed-officials for their contact information.

Take this easy action to ensure that your access to local information doesn’t become another victim to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you and may you and your family remain safe and informed during this difficult time.

About the Author:

Dean Ridings is the CEO of America’s Newspapers, an advocacy group for the newspaper industry.



Your views

Sheriff Rasmussen needs to shed light on investigation

I haven’t made up my mind who to vote for in the upcoming sheriff’s race. However, Boyd Rasmussen’s failure to shed light on a current judicial review in the run-up to the race is concerning.

Instead of making derogatory remarks about an opponent, it seems to me that Rasmussen should make clear, to the extent that he is able, what this matter is about. If he is unable to do so, he should say so, and give us the reasons why.

Keeping whatever this matter is under the carpet, when voters are trying to make up their minds who to vote for, is a disservice to the voters. I hope The Observer continues to cover this issue.

David Moyal
La Grande

We should be very concerned by DA’s motion to disqualify Judge Williams

Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel’s ill-informed motion to disqualify Judge Wes Williams from overseeing criminal cases, if allowed, will have a negative impact on the constitutional rights of citizens living in Union and Wallowa counties in and out of the courtroom. Her willingness to jump straight to a motion to disqualify him rather than pursue the avenues that

Write to us

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exist to dispute a ruling, such as filing an appeal, leads me to believe she has an agenda.

Last year, 7,881 citizens from both counties voted for Wes Williams to be their circuit court judge. Many people who voted for Wes did so based on years of professional experiences with him and the firsthand knowledge that he is brilliant, fair and ethical, has an exceptional work ethic, and loves everything about Eastern Oregon and its people.

Wes Williams is exactly the kind of person we deserve and need as a circuit court judge. The district attorney’s motion to disqualify him is a step to override the informed choice of the people.

Whether you voted for Wes or not, you should be very concerned by the district attorney’s actions. I encourage people to dig beneath the surface and read the motion and the transcripts of the hearings. You will learn, just as I have, that we are being misled.

Cassie Miller
Union

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

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U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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City of Cove: Mayor Del Little, (503)-508-6727, 504 Alder St., P.O. Box 8, Cove, OR 97824; City Recorder Donna Lewis, (541) 568-4566.

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