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NEWSPRINT NEGOTIATIONS

Tariffs on newsprint are killing jobs and hurting newspapers

President Trump attacks the media by calling it “fake news” and “enemies of the people” on Twitter, but now his commerce department is finding a new way to hurt the industry: imposing tariffs on Canadian newsprint.

At *Eugene Weekly*, the cost to produce a 28-page paper in July is more than the cost to produce a 32-page paper in March. The tariff, which affects newspapers across the country from small rural publications to those in large cities, arose from a complaint by a Washington paper mill.

The Trump administration’s Department of Commerce proposed the newsprint tariffs in January after the North Pacific Paper Corporation (NORPAC) in Longview, Washington, filed a complaint that Canadian newsprint producers had lower prices and made it difficult for American producers to compete.

The original tariffs that were imposed in January added up to 32 percent in some cases; however, the tariffs were lowered to just under 17 percent in early August.

The *Tampa Bay Times* cited the price hikes associated with the tariffs as the reason it laid off 50 employees. Employees aren’t the only ones getting cut — *The Hill* reported on Aug. 6 that *The Robesonian*, Lumberton, North Carolina’s newspaper, would cut its Sunday color comic strip because of the tariffs.

The New York Times has even seen the effects of the tariffs; however, in an email statement to *Eugene Weekly*, a *Times* spokeswoman said that the tariffs’ impact was not significant “due to the increasing prominence of our digital products and the subscription and advertising revenue associated with them.”

Locally, *The Register-Guard* has seen three separate increases on newsprint, with the highest increase totaling 20 percent.

The *RG*’s publisher, Shanna Cannon, says the *RG* gets its newsprint from several sources and that different types of newsprint are affected differently by the increases. Cannon says the paper always has a supply of newsprint on hand, and that the newsprint manufacturer will announce a price with a 30-day notice.

“We order newsprint in advance, so we have a month or six weeks supply on hand,” she says. Cannon adds that depending on when the newsprint is ordered, the paper could miss the latest round of price hikes, but would still be paying higher prices due to past increases.

Cannon says that the *RG* hasn’t changed its relationship with advertisers; however, neither Cannon nor GateHouse Media, the *RG*’s parent company, could provide an explanation as to how the newspaper was absorbing the increased cost of newsprint.

Some publishers have raised prices on advertisers and news consumers. Chas Hundley is the publisher of three rural newspapers and buys his newsprint in Albany, Oregon. He saw a price increase of 5 percent on newsprint.

Hundley says that due to the tariffs, he was forced to increase subscription costs from \$35 to \$45 and raise advertiser rates by 5 percent.

Even with newspaper publishers like Hundley having to charge advertisers more money, NORPAC insists that the tariffs have a minimal effect on the newspaper industry.

“The American industry is not trying to seek an advantage, but rather a level playing field,” says NORPAC spokesman David Richey. “NORPAC believes that high quality local journalism shouldn’t have to depend on unfairly traded imports causing injury to material producers and their families.”

Hundley says that none of his clients were upset with the price increases, but acknowledges that the price increases aren’t good for anyone in the business, whether consumer or producer.

“I’m the only game in town. The community has an older population that doesn’t have a lot of internet access and they get the paper. If prices do take my paper out, it would create a news desert for some of our communities.” ■

ACTIVIST ALERT

- Impacted landowners, tribal members, rafters, business owners, local elected officials and more will gather for a rally, speeches and “a celebration of tens of thousands of comments to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)” from 11 am to noon Thursday, Aug. 16, in southern Oregon, according to a press release from Rogue Climate. The rally is a couple days before the Aug. 20 public comment deadline for the **Jordan Cove Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export terminal and Pacific Connector fracked gas pipeline**. The rally is at the DEQ office on 221 Stewart Avenue in Medford. For a guide on how to submit comments, go to nolngexports.org/write-comments.

- The Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) is holding a public information meeting about the **Thurston Hills Non-Motorized Trails and Forest Management Project** 10 am to 7 pm Friday, Aug. 17, at the Springfield City Hall, Library Meeting Room. The Thurston Hills Project includes timber harvest and new non-motorized trail development on BLM land approximately five miles east-southeast of downtown Springfield. The BLM says the “meeting is an open house format where attendees can learn more about the chosen actions, view project maps and learn more about the BLM’s timber and recreation programs in Northwest Oregon.”