



Support Local Journalism. Protect Our Democracy.

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FACT SHEET/FAQ

The decline of local news

- New York State is not immune from “news deserts”—geographic areas in which there is little to no local newspaper coverage.
- According to [New York - The Expanding News Desert \(usnewsdeserts.com\)](http://usnewsdeserts.com):
 - New York has one county without any newspaper (Orleans County)
 - 13 counties with only one newspaper.
 - Although only three daily newspapers in New York State have closed since 2004, a significant number of weekly newspapers have shut down.
 - A number of both daily and weekly newspapers have merged.
 - Between 2004 and 2019, the total number of daily newspapers declined from 62 to 54, and the number of weekly newspapers declined from 439 to 249.
- Newspaper newsroom staff in the United States have declined by more than half since 2004.
- More than 2,000 American newspapers have closed since 2004, including nearly half of New York State’s weekly newspapers.

What Is the impact on our communities?

- The decline in local journalism leads to a marked decline in
 - civic engagement,
 - public health and safety,
 - cost of government borrowing,
 - a rise in extreme partisanship and mistrust, and
 - a risk to the survival of small local businesses and community organizations.
- A 2020 Pew Research Center study found that Americans who mainly get their news on social media are less likely to get the facts right and more likely to hear some unproven claims.
- Research shows that the existence of a local newspaper is directly correlated with lower costs of municipal financing (2018 Hutchins Center working paper), with higher civic engagement (Journal of Politics, 2017) and a lower level of extreme partisanship (Journal of Communication, 2018).

How did we get here?

- Advertising has traditionally made up 85% of newspaper revenues, most of it in print.
- Print advertising fell 71% between 2000 and 2012 as advertisers migrated to a digital ecosystem controlled by Google through its dominance of online ad sales, brokerage and placement. Google attracts viewers to its own website by displaying headlines and sections of news articles produced by

news organizations, but those viewers don't tend to click through to the news organizations' own websites. As a result, Google earns the ad revenue attracted by publication of news, without contributing to the salaries of the professional journalists who gather and report the news.

- Expenses for paper and delivery have risen dramatically, as much as 25%. In 2017, the Trump Administration imposed tariffs of newsprint from Canada, which is the sole source of newsprint used in the eastern half of the US. Although the tariff was overturned, prices remained elevated. Nearly all of the few remaining newsprint mills have switched to manufacturing packaging materials.
- As a result, newspapers are struggling to survive and large sections of New York (mostly upstate) are now "news deserts," areas in which there is little to no local newspaper coverage.

How can New York State preserve its residents' access to local news?

- The Local Journalism Sustainability Act provides a payroll tax credit which would be a lifeline to newspapers, news websites and broadcast news stations.
- Trust in news can be revitalized by replanting professional journalists in thousands of communities throughout New York State. When local residents see reporters covering the school board meetings, asking questions of city council members, and interviewing community members about their opinions on matters of public interest, we believe it will restore a sense of confidence in the interaction between the press and the community.
- The tax credit (50% of the first \$50,000 of a journalist's salary) would enable news outlets them to continue to employ journalists to cover their communities by offsetting other increased expenses (paper and gasoline).
- The goal is to enable professional journalists to remain in the community and develop relationships and institutional memory that improve coverage, trust and depth of reporting.
- Not only will the payroll tax credit preserve existing journalism jobs in New York State, it may attract jobs performing centralized functions for multi-state companies that are currently located in lower-cost states.
- Each newsroom job also supports staff working in the pressroom, handling mailed copies, overseeing home delivery, selling advertising and performing accounting work.
- Further, each job which is preserved or added has a multiplier impact on local employment. Every 100 jobs in newspapers and related media industries supports 573 additional jobs. ([Updated employment multipliers for the U.S. economy | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](#))

Would there be standards to ensure the benefit accrues to professional journalism?

- **To qualify, news publications:**
 - Must employ at least one full time employee covering local news
 - Can be print or digital
 - Cannot be owned, controlled or majority funded by 501c4
 - Cannot be owned, controlled or majority funded by a PAC or any other entities described in Section 527 of the IRS code
 - Must carry media liability insurance
 - Must disclose ownership of the news organization (newspapers are covered by Sec. 330 of General Business Law)
 - Must publish at least once in a calendar quarter
 - Must have published at least once in the preceding four calendar quarters

- **Definition of local journalist**
 - 'Local Journalist' means a full-time employee whose primary job is to cover a community in New York State, a group of communities in New York State, or issues affecting New York State as a whole.
- **Is only eligible for full-time employees.**
 - Someone who spends not less than an average of 30 hours a week providing qualifying services in a given calendar quarter and lives within 50 miles of the local community or group of communities where qualified services are provided.
- We believe trust in news can be revitalized by replanting professional journalists in thousands of communities throughout New York State. When local residents see reporters covering the school board meetings, asking questions of city council members, and interviewing community members about their opinions on matters of public interest, we believe it will restore a sense of confidence in the interaction between the press and the community.

What is the Fiscal Impact

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics there were 5,170 news analysts, reporters and journalists in New York State in 2021. These job titles also include those who work in broadcast news.
- Numbers of newsrooms statewide to benefit: 354
 - 53 in New York City
 - 21 in New York City that cover the BIPOC community.
- The tax credit would be \$100M per year for five years.