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## Editorial: There is No Replacement for Quality Journalism

News/Media Alliance

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### **There is No Replacement for Quality Journalism: Support Urgently Needed to Continue Providing Vital News and Information to Readers**

Across the country, quality journalism is critical for sharing important news affecting our society. Through their timely reporting, journalists play a uniquely critical role in informing, engaging, and empowering citizens. Without the dedicated work of journalists, corruption would remain undiscovered and unchecked. As crucial watchdogs, journalists are often the only stewards keeping a close eye on local institutions, governments, and businesses.

Americans consume more news than ever, with news organizations reaching more than 135 million US adults each week. But despite record audiences, news publisher revenue in the U.S. has dropped by more than 50% in recent years.

One of the biggest threats to journalism is Big Tech. Just two platforms, Meta (which owns Facebook, Instagram and Threads) and Google, control access to news online. These platforms have unprecedented dominance over the digital marketplace and capture more than 70% of all digital advertising revenue. Big Tech is reaping the financial benefits of news publishers' painstaking work, while publishers are left with literal scraps – not enough to continue reinvesting at the same level to provide high-quality content their users need and enjoy and have come to expect.

The Big Tech platforms have overwhelming market power, more than any one company should have, setting the rules for news publishers and determining how journalism is displayed, prioritized, and monetized. Left with no choice but to play by Big Tech's rules, lest they lose what traffic they do still get to their sites, news publishers must hand over their valuable content without receiving compensation from the platforms. Readers also lose in this scenario, as the algorithms the platforms use to decide what content they see and when lacks transparency and balance. Not only that, but readers also lose the freedom to decide for themselves what they want to read based on what is important to them.

The wildfires currently raging in Canada are a national emergency, one that requires those in a position to disseminate important safety and evacuation information to those who need it, to do so. Facebook is a key source of news for people in remote areas who are affected by the wildfires and who don't have a local news source. They are turning to Facebook for news and are not finding the information they need to stay safe. Because of legislation recently passed by the Canadian government to require the tech platforms to pay news publishers for use of their content, Meta has decided to remove all news from Facebook rather than pay publishers, thereby depriving its users of information they need and want in a time of great threat to their safety. Meta would let its users incur serious risks to their safety and well-being just to make a point, putting its head in the sand.

Canadians, as well as the American public, deserve a free and diverse press, which supports a healthy and vibrant democracy. The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act (JCPA) is a bipartisan bill that will provide news publishers with the ability to negotiate with and be fairly compensated by Big Tech for their valuable content. The JCPA is modeled after a law that was passed in Australia, which included baseball style arbitration and resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars and newsroom growth and a vast increase in journalism jobs there. The need to save America's newsrooms transcends party lines, garnering strong support from both sides of the aisle and among voters. Seven in ten Americans polled said they support Congress passing the JCPA.

Quality journalism is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity in times of rampant misinformation online and in which increasing natural disasters and public health crises are only going to get worse. Only quality journalism can keep communities informed with timely and accurate breaking news and events coverage and report the truth about their government's activities being carried out on their behalf (using their tax dollars) that impact their safety, health, and livelihood. When Covid-19 arrived in the U.S., news publishers took their paywalls down on stories about the public health emergency so that all Americans had free, unencumbered access to critical health and safety information as the country shut down and hospitals filled to their brims. News publishers do this because it is the right

thing to do. But without support in the form of fair compensation from the tech platforms, newspapers will continue to disappear from American communities. The JCPA is our best bet to protect quality journalism and ensure it is here when we need it. There is no replacement for quality journalism. Now is the time for Congress to act and finally get publishers the compensation they deserve. Communities cannot afford to wait any longer.

Call your member of Congress and tell them to pass the JCPA: 202.224.3121. For more information about the JCPA, visit [www.JCPABill.org](http://www.JCPABill.org).