

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

U.S. Senate Floor Statement in Support of Including the Local Journalism Sustainability Act in the Build Back Better Package

November 4, 2021

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

CANTWELL: Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the Local Journalism Sustainability Act and before the Majority Leader leaves, I want to thank him for his leadership on such an important piece of legislation. From the very beginning, he understood the fact that diversity in news sources, about competition, about it being a key part of our democracy, and we wouldn't be at the precipice of getting support for local journalism without his help. So I thank him for that.

We originally introduced legislation here in the Senate that Senators Wyden, Kelly, Schatz, Markey, Murray, Klobuchar, my colleagues, Senator Schumer, Manchin, Cortez Masto, Sinema, Baldwin, Luján, Leahy, and Blumenthal all supported. This is important legislation because we hope our House colleagues will take this up this afternoon or tomorrow as it is included in the Build Back Better program to making sure that we have a free press that is essential to our democracy and that we have true competition. Local news is a trusted source of news. Working together, journalistic standards, local newspapers, and broadcasters play a critical role in holding our elected officials accountable, shining a spotlight on important news, and challenging the issues of our community to come to light.

As one friend of mine said, local news is like hanging a lantern on a problem so that the light shines through. And that is exactly why we want to make sure that we continue to support having these diversity of voices, especially while we see on the online world, unfair and uncompetitive practices that we know will be discussed by our colleagues, looked at by the Department of Justice, certainly legislation proposed about. But in the meantime, we want to keep these diversity of voices working.

We know that since 2005, newspapers have lost more than 40,000 newsroom employees, about 60% of their workforce, most states have lost more than 50% of their newsroom workforce. And we cannot let regional and community news organizations continue to die as we navigate very challenging information age business issues. That is why this legislation is so important. Local journalism is highly trusted in communities around the country. According to a 2019 study from Gallup and Knight Foundation, Americans trust local news over national news by a two to one margin to, quote, 'report the news without bias,' end quote. So local journalism has developed that trust based on transparency, accuracy, ethical reporting, and shining a light on important issues, including crime and corruptions, and holding public officials accountable.

Local news reporting takes national news stories and translates them into their community news, and America's newspapers and online journalists, radio, and television broadcasters are at the heart of this media landscape. During the pandemic, broadcasters continued to provide essential

information to audiences reporting the news and helping us keep connected on such an important issue.

The Local Journalism Sustainability Act is essential to maintaining that trust, that diversity of voices, and that local perspective. The tax incentives in this bill will help local newspapers and digital-only news journalists, and broadcast newsrooms remain financially viable to retain and hire local base journalists to cover local news stories.

This bill helps incentivize newspapers and broadcasters, including those owned, investing in locally reporting news into the relevant communities. Local and regional minority owned business outlets also benefit from this provision, which is one of the reasons why those associations representing the Black Press, The National Publishers Association, and National Association of Hispanic Publications also support this legislation.

Mr. President, Americans' democracy really does depend on ensuring that we have access to information and that we have informed decisions. Doing so also means that we have true competition in information and news that can be verified. So I'm pleased that the House has incorporated this important provision into the Build Back Better reconciliation program.

I hope when this comes to the Senate, our colleagues will join in supporting this in helping local newspapers, radio, and television stations, and digital journalists continue to help us get the news. I thank the president. I yield the floor