



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Don't Stop the Presses! Senator Brad Hoylman & Assembly Member Carrie Woerner Introduce "Local Journalism Sustainability Act"

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## **DON'T STOP THE PRESSES!** **SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN &** **ASSEMBLY MEMBER CARRIE WOERNER INTRODUCE** **"LOCAL JOURNALISM SUSTAINABILITY ACT"**

NEW YORK -- Today, State Senator Brad Hoylman (Manhattan-D/WFP) and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner (Saratoga-D) announced introduction of the "Local Journalism Sustainability Act." The legislation would create new tax credits to support local newspapers, digital publications and other local news organizations, including a personal income tax credit for subscribers and a business tax credit to support the hiring of local journalists.

**State Senator Brad Hoylman said:** "Community news is the bedrock of our local democracy. But since 2004, more than 20% of American newspapers have gone out of business, including 40% of weekly papers in New York. Local news organizations are struggling to stay afloat against powerful media

conglomerates that threaten to shut out the issues important to our local communities. The Local Journalism Sustainability Act is a commonsense way to help local news outlets survive and continue to inform the public in a tumultuous media landscape.”

**Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner said:** “News and information from local sources about our communities and community institutions help us to trust and understand our world and our place in the world. It is a terrible irony that as the ability to communicate information increases, our ability to know and trust the sources of communication has precipitously decreased. Whether small towns or big cities, New Yorkers need local journalism to reliably monitor and report on uniquely local concerns from school board policy and the actions of municipal boards to the volunteer organizations and activities that enrich our lives.”

**Diane Kennedy, President of the New York Publishers Association said:** “Local journalists serve as the eyes and ears of the community, gathering and reporting vital facts about the actions of local governments, community organizations and individuals. The existence of a robust local news environment has been shown to enhance civic engagement, reduce hyper-partisanship and help prevent increase in the cost of government borrowing. But the business model of local news has been destroyed by the loss of advertising revenue to tech giants, resulting in a catastrophic decline in journalism jobs. ‘News deserts,’ areas in which there is little to no local news coverage, have expanded throughout the country. This legislation by Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner serves as a temporary bridge to a new business model for local news that will support local jobs for community-based journalists, while also rewarding taxpayers who purchase subscriptions to local news organizations. This legislation will help New York State residents to remain informed about and engaged in their communities.”

This legislation creates two new tax credits to support the local journalism industry:

1. Individuals who subscribe to a local publication will get an annual tax credit for 80% of subscription cost in the first year and 50% in subsequent years, up to \$250 a year.
2. Eligible local news organizations that employ full time local journalists (those that live within 50 miles of the area they cover) get a quarterly tax credit up to 50% of the salary for the first year of their employment and up to 30% in subsequent years, up to five years total, for the first \$12,500 in wages paid to the journalist each quarter.

To qualify, the primary purpose of the publication or broadcaster must be coverage of local community issues, and the publication or broadcaster cannot employ more than 1,500 people. Multiple news organizations under the common control of a single entity would be treated as a single employer for the purposes of the credit.

The journalism sector provides a vital public service, and it also provides many New Yorkers with jobs. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of May 2020, 5,920 New Yorkers were employed as journalists, reporters and news analysts. That’s more than any other state in America.

Since 2004, more than 20% of American newspapers have shut down. In total they now employ half as many journalists as they did 17 years ago. This decline is most stark when looking at New York’s weekly newspapers, with 190 of them closing shop in this time period.

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