



National Newspaper Association – Washington Office

PO Box 5737

Arlington, VA 22205

703.237-9801

Fax: 703.237-9808

Web Site: www.nna.org

January 12, 2017

Vice President-Elect Mike Pence
Presidential Transition Headquarters
1800 F Street, NW, Room G117
Washington, DC 20270–0117

Dear Mr. Pence:

I write as president of the nation’s oldest national business organization for newspapers, the 131-year old National Newspaper Association. On behalf of our 2,200 community newspaper members, I seek the attention of your administration to our nation’s thousands of small newspapers.

Who are we?

We are the people who cover small towns, communities of interest and suburban areas—much of which formed the voting population that brought your administration to office. As President-Elect Trump has recognized the “forgotten man,” please know that in Washington, DC, we are often the forgotten newspapers as we are sometimes unseen in the shadows of the much larger metropolitan dailies. People in DC think we are going out of business, even though $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Americans in small towns say they rely upon us as their source of local news. People say the internet has subsumed our livelihoods and that real journalism is a relic of the 20th century, even as our digital presence combines with our printed circulation to reach a stable, civic-minded audience. We are not only alive, we are vigorously committed to the well-being of our communities. In fact, the biggest problems we face today are those facing small towns across America—those very issues your administration is committed to address, principally economic development.

NNA maintains an active presence in Washington, DC, through our government relations program. Every March, delegates from across the country visit their members of Congress. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience.

Our list of needs in the nation’s capital is not long.

- 1) We need a U.S. Postal Service that reaches every home in America reliably and at reasonable cost. Changes at USPS in the past decade have damaged our delivery to subscribers. Postal reform legislation is our top priority in the 115th Congress and the Postal Service quickly needs qualified appointees to its board of governors, of which nine out of nine offices are now vacant.
- 2) We seek fair taxation, with a recognition that passthrough entities such as Subchapter S and LLC corporations are the organizations of choice for most family businesses. As employers and product producers in America's home towns, we should not be taxed at a higher rate than the companies targeted for repatriation in the coming tax reform legislation.
- 3) Our staffs are hard-working journalists, driven by the need to cover news ranging from a prairie fire to a high school football game, the church social to the city council. We are the front line for political accountability. We need the ability to use flex time under the Fair Labor Standards Act so we can compensate our workforce for their overtime by providing needed time off in our slow periods. President Obama's changes to the exempt salary thresholds under the Fair Labor Standards Act took that flexibility away and amounted to a massive overreach when the nation needed a more tailored, sensible approach. We are asking your Labor Department to reconsider the overtime rule with regionally-adjusted levels and reasonable flex time options for small businesses.
- 4) Finally, transparency is always our core mission. We need a strong Freedom of Information Act and a shield law for journalists. As the official record newspapers across America, we also consider public notices a critical component of transparency. Public notices are the critical cogs in the network of local community information and must be part of the federal transparency mandate as well. We provide the four-square framework for valid public notice. We are independent of the government, authenticated in court, archived for the future and accessible for the readers. Our newspapers provide the best and cheapest solution for transparency. Printed notices are placed online by publishers at no taxpayer cost in virtually every community around America. Yet Washington takes the lead, often, in pretending that stashing public information on a government website—whether federal or local—is somehow cheaper, more useful and more accessible. We disagree. We need your administration to recognize that the private sector does the job. Please be our megaphone.

The challenges ahead for your administration and the 115th Congress are substantial. As your team prepares for the year ahead, we look forward to

opportunities for open dialogue in the interest of building stronger communities with viable community newspapers. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Paxton IV". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a stylized "P".

Matthew Paxton IV
A fourth generation newspaper publisher
The News-Gazette, Lexington VA
And President, National Newspaper Association