

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2019

Michael E. Reed
CEO
New Media Investment Group
1345 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10105

Paul Bascobert
President & CEO
Gannett Co., Inc.
7950 Jones Branch Dr.
McLean, VA 22107

Dear Mr. Reed and Mr. Bascobert:

We write to urge you to voluntarily recognize any union representative selected by a majority of workers in any newsroom owned by New Media. The recent New Media-Gannett merger could have significant impacts in your newsrooms and their communities. Union representation will help newspaper employees better advocate for the pay, benefits, and job security they deserve during this transition. It will also give a voice to the communities that rely on the newspapers you own.

As you know, the merger combines the two largest U.S. newspaper chains and, as a result, New Media will own more than 600 newspapers across the country when it is complete.¹ You have already announced plans to cut between \$275 million and \$300 million in costs annually once the merger is complete.² If New Media's past cost-cutting measures are any indicator, newsroom employees are right to be concerned about the future of their newspapers and their jobs. *The Columbus Dispatch*³, the *Columbia Daily Tribune*⁴, the *Florida Times-Union*⁵, and the *Austin American-Statesman*⁶, among others, all saw their newsrooms shrink after they were purchased by New Media's subsidiary GateHouse as part of the company's effort to increase profits and shareholder value.

In the face of these layoffs, newsrooms are increasingly turning to union representation to advocate for themselves and their local newspapers. Recent organizing efforts have resulted in

¹ Lombardo, Cara and Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg. "GateHouse Media Parent to Buy Gannett for \$1.4 Billion." *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 5, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gatehouse-media-parent-to-buy-gannett-for-1-4-billion-11565031875>

² Bomey, Nathan. "Shareholders of USA TODAY owner Gannett and New Media Investment Group approve merger." *USA TODAY*, Nov. 14, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/11/14/gannett-new-media-investment-group-merger-vote-results/2578352001/>

³ Kennedy, Eleanor. "Columbus Dispatch lays off veteran reporters, others as parent company restructures." *Columbus Business First*, May 24, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/news/2019/05/24/columbus-dispatch-lays-off-veteran-reporters.html>

⁴ Hardison, Kathryn. "GateHouse offers voluntary severance packages to some Tribune employees." *Missourian*, Aug. 23, 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.columbiaindependant.com/news/local/gatehouse-offers-voluntary-severance-packages-to-some-tribune-employees/article_322cda8a-a71e-11e8-9198-0384ce72580e.html

⁵ Florida Times-Union Staff. "Times-Union announces additional layoffs." *The Florida Times-Union*, Jan. 18, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.jacksonville.com/news/metro/2018-01-18/times-union-announces-additional-layoffs>

⁶ Dinges, Gary. "Tatestman to end Ahori Si, offer voluntary severance to all employees." *Austin-American Statesman*, Sep. 26, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.statesman.com/business/20180810/statesman-to-end-ahori-s-offer-voluntary-severance-to-all-employees>

union representation for employees at *The Arizona Republic* and the *Florida Times-Union*, and the NewsGuild-CWA now represents 33 bargaining units of approximately 1,100 workers at your two companies.⁷ Given the increasing interest in union representation among your employees, we urge you to voluntarily recognize any union representative selected by a majority of employees in any of your newsrooms. Your employees deserve to have a voice at the table.

Union representation will empower workers to advocate not only for themselves but also their newspapers and communities. Almost one-fifth, or nearly 1,800, of all U.S. newspapers have closed since 2004. As a result, 171 counties have no local newspaper, and almost half of all U.S. counties have access to one newspaper, often one that is published once a week.⁸ In many communities, local newspapers are the primary source of news and information, yet the consequences of closing or downsizing a newspaper are not considered by news executives seeking to maximize shareholder value and profit. Through collective bargaining with the newsrooms, affected communities will have a voice in decisions about the future of their newspapers.

Newspapers, particularly local newspapers, are critical to an informed public and a strong democracy. Consolidation in the news industry has led to the hollowing out of newsrooms, and communities across the country are paying the price. As soon-to-be owners of more than 600 newspapers, you have a responsibility to preserve Americans' access to high-quality, locally reported news. The New Media-Gannett merger will have a significant impact on the livelihoods of your employees and the communities they report in. Voluntarily recognizing union representation for any of your newsrooms who choose it will ensure both the workers and the communities have a voice in that process.

Sincerely,


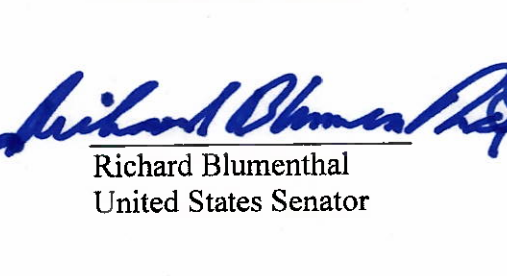
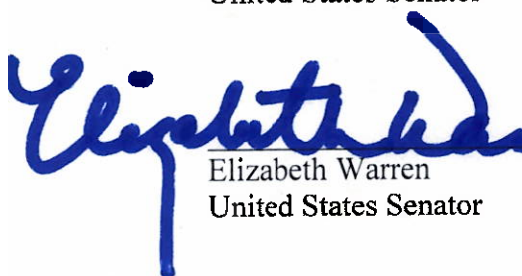


Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

⁷ NewsGuild-CWA. Aug. 5, 2019. "Facing Gannett, GateHouse Merger, NewsGuild Renews Commitment to Save Local News." Retrieved from: <http://newsguild.org/mediaguild3/facing-gannett-gatehouse-merger-newsguild-renews-commitment-to-save-local-news/>

⁸ Abernathy, Penelope M. *The Expanding News Desert*. University of North Carolina Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media, Oct. 15, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.usnewsdeserts.com/>


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


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