



The Miami Valley Coalition for Strong Local Journalism

NEWS RELEASE

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Open letter from citizens concerned about trends in local journalism

To the Miami Valley Community,

We are at a crossroads. We must examine life as we know it as individuals, as a community, as Ohioans and as a nation. The times demand it.

We must search together for solutions and bold changes in our beloved community with resolve, hard work, creative vision, open minds, loving hearts and facts.

We are called upon to be truthful and forthright in these times and we need local journalism – local reporters and editors - to do this work with us and for us.

We who have signed this letter are in support of strong local newspapers that operate with independence and impartiality, holding public officials and other powerful interests to account, regardless of politics or ideology. We want to trust that local journalists are acting without prejudice and bias. We want the underrepresented in our community to have a voice and we want voters to have the information they need to make wise choices.

We organized last year out of concern that Cox Media Group had sold the Dayton Daily News (and its other Miami Valley newspapers, the Springfield News-Sun and Journal-News in Butler County) and that we would lose a hundred year old journalism organization to owners with no demonstrated concern for our community's welfare. We called a community meeting last summer to express our alarm.

In a complicated series of legal moves, the Cox organization in Atlanta eventually retained ownership of the local newspapers, and promised to keep them publishing 7 days a week, but did sell WHIO-TV and WHIO Radio to Apollo Global Management.

In February, we had a collegial meeting with Jim Bebbington, editor of the Dayton Daily News, to express our support directly to him and to share our hopes for the future strength of the paper in our community. None of us knew then that the newly independent paper would face a baptism by fire, covering the Covid-19 pandemic and then the community's response to the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minnesota. Even before these pressing demands on its staff, the Dayton Daily News, like newspapers all over the country, had seen declining advertising revenues, which threaten its existence even now.

The Dayton Daily News staff has risen to the challenge, providing excellent coverage of these urgent current events and, unlike other newspapers around the country purchased by hedge funds, it has not laid off journalists.

We intend to continue our support and our dialogue with the Dayton Daily News staff but, more than that, we will stand in favor of improved coverage across the media landscape, holding news outlets accountable to the diverse communities of the Miami Valley. News organizations, like responsible individuals, must be self-reflective, constantly examining their own motivations and actions.

The times demand it and our citizens deserve nothing less.

Signed,

The Miami Valley Coalition for Strong Local Journalism

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Richard Lapedes and Maureen Lynch

Jan Underwood

Nan Whaley
Mayor of the city of Dayton

Madeleine Bair
Free Press

Megan Bachman
Editor, Yellow Springs News

Stephen Starr
Journalist and Author

Mia Lewis

Vince McKelvey
Retired Dayton Daily News Reporter

Peter Benkendorf
Founder, The Collaboratory

SIX WAYS TO SUPPORT STRONG, LOCAL JOURNALISM

+Find a local news organization you trust and support it+

1. **Subscribe** to your local paper or news-based website
2. **Join** your local member-supported news organization
3. **Notice** the advertisers and organizations that support local journalism and let them know you appreciate it
4. **Encourage** young people to be critical news consumers
5. **Give feedback:** *Write letters to the editor, be in touch with reporters and editors via social media.*
6. **Pitch In:** Get involved in the Miami Valley Coalition for Strong Local Journalism as we work to hold local media accountable. We believe the Dayton area deserves media that are professional, impartial and give voice to underrepresented members of our community.

If you share our concerns and would like to volunteer to help in our efforts, contact us: localjournalism937@gmail.com