U.S. Senate Pushes to Support Local News and Journalism Amid Crises

BRUNSWICK, ME — U.S. Senator Angus King (I-Maine) this week joined a group of nineteen senators seeking to support local journalism and media in any future coronavirus relief package. In a letter to Senate leadership and appropriators, the senators stress that the widespread impact of the pandemic – including plummeting advertising revenue – could decimate regional and local news outlets even as communities have become increasingly reliant on their reporting amidst the public health crisis. Already some newspapers have reduced or eliminated print editions, while other news outlets have furloughed staff.

“The current public health crisis has made the already vital role of local news even more critical,” the senators wrote. “Some of the most important guidance for families and businesses during this crisis has been highly localized. Local journalism has been providing communities answers to critical questions, including information on where to get locally tested, hospital capacity, road closures, essential business hours of operation, and shelter-in-place orders. During this unprecedented public health crisis, people need to have access to their trusted local news outlets for this reliable and sometimes life-saving information.”

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— Source: Office of U.S. Senator Angus King (I-Maine)
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All,

The circumstances surrounding the coronavirus are continuing to develop each day. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage our members to exercise safety and caution. We are closely monitoring developments and offer the following information and guidance.

What to know about COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus):

The general risk remains low; however, there have been several confirmed cases across the country including two confirmed cases in Georgia (Our conference location).

In confirmed COVID-19 cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

According to the CDC, older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

Please follow guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and U.S. State Department for recommendations and travel advisories.

Person-to-person spread is occurring, although it’s unclear exactly how it is transmitted and how easily the virus spreads between people.

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

We could be in this state for an extended period of time and encourage you to plan accordingly for student and adult programming. Crisis ultimately breeds innovation. This is a unique opportunity for us to re-evaluate how we may still nurture and develop working professionals and future STEM leaders, all while being mindful of our members’ health, safety, and being intentionally inclusive of those without resources.

The National Executive Committee and Conference Team are working closely to assess the situation and consider the potential options for the conference. We are evaluating the development of a virtual conference experience. Our goal is to create an unmatched experience that retains the same energy, value, and diverse experience for all participants no matter the format the conference takes. Rest assured, we are continuously monitoring this developing situation and will continue to keep you all updated on plans for the conference experience as we move forward.

Sincerely,

**Terry J. Morris**, BDPA President

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