

SENATE STATEMENT ON THE CLOSURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FALLS JOURNAL

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

HON. AMY KLOBUCHAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE

JUNE 22, 2021

Mr. President, today I rise to honor and pay tribute to the *International Falls Journal*, the local newspaper of the International Falls and Koochiching County communities that has provided timely, trustworthy, and thorough reporting to Minnesotans for the past 110 years. On June 24, 2021, the *International Falls Journal* will sadly publish its final edition.

Founded in 1911 by Clarence Burton Montgomery as *The Daily Journal*, the then-daily paper has been a community staple since its start, informing locals of who was born and who died, local business news, and what happened at city council and school board meetings. Through different disasters and crises, *The Journal* made sure they delivered the news to their readers. In 1988, a fire ripped through its office on a Friday night, claiming most of the building and everything inside, including the paper's equipment. Still, that Monday, and for weeks following the fire while the outlet was without printers, the paper was published as planned. This was 38 years after the great flood of 1950, when — you guessed it — the paper still ended up on their readers' doorsteps despite the unprecedented circumstance.

The paper went through several owners before landing in the hands of Arlin Albrecht and Phil Duff, *The Journal's* current publishers, who purchased the paper in 1974.

Regardless of ownership, locals have always been able to count on *The Journal*. International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce President Tricia Heibel said it well: “From births, deaths, marriages, school events and sporting highlights, from lost pets to everything else, it was just a really central communication tool.”

As the daughter of a newspaperman, I grew up knowing just how important local newspapers like the *International Falls Journal* are. In fact, it is thanks to the presence of a local newspaper — the *Duluth Herald* — in my dad's childhood home that my grandmother spotted his interest in storytelling when he was just 12. Local papers played an irreplaceable role in my father's life, as they continue to today for countless readers.

But today, newspapers of all sizes are struggling and closing.

Ad revenue for U.S. newspapers plummeted from \$49.4 billion in 2005 to \$14.3 billion in 2018. During that time, two other companies, Facebook and Google — worth over \$2.4 trillion combined — became advertising titans.

These two companies don't just control the majority of online advertising; they've built power over the news and crushed local news outlets along the way.

With the closure of *The Journal*, we are once again seeing the impacts of this firsthand. We can't stand by and watch this happen to our independent press. That's why I have introduced bipartisan legislation to let news publishers join together to negotiate fair terms with these giant digital corporations. We must give independent papers the chance to compete.

But even as we work to ensure other papers are able to keep their lights on, the *International Falls Journal* is a reminder of the value of local journalism. For more than a century, it has empowered its readers by providing them with accurate, relevant information about their communities. It has captured moments big and small that together tell a beautiful story of the region that will live on.

Even as it closes its doors, generations will benefit from the legacy it leaves behind.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

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