



Virginia Press
Association

March 19, 2020

Governor Ralph Northam
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

On behalf of the more than 175 members of the Virginia Press Association, we thank you for your response to the Coronavirus pandemic. These are challenging times and we appreciate the advice, guidance, and composure you have provided to Virginians.

As you know, our members represent the print and digital media in the Commonwealth, and we are working closely with government officials to keep the public accurately informed during this emergency. We hope that critical communication about COVID-19 can continue unabated. With these needs in mind, we request you to designate newspapers as "essential businesses" so they can continue operating, gathering and disseminating the news.

In past emergencies, newspapers have been designated "critical emergency services" and were exempted from restrictions placed on other types of businesses and individuals. This designation is necessary and appropriate given the constitutional role of the press, especially during times of emergency. Our local publishers and editors take the role of communicating accurate, reliable, and critical information very seriously.

If you determine a need to curtail private business activities in Virginia in the next days or weeks, we hope you will exempt news organizations from those restrictions and designate them "essential businesses."

Please know that you can count on VPA and its members newspapers to support your efforts during this pandemic to provide the public with information that will lessen the impact of the crisis and help keep them safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betsy W. Edwards".

Betsy W. Edwards
Executive Director
Virginia Press Association