



Keynote Speech of Danielle Coffey President & CEO, News/Media Alliance
Pennsylvania News Media Association: 100th Anniversary Gala
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Thank you for inviting me to participate in this very impressive event. And congratulations on PNA's 100th anniversary representing news organizations in the great state of Pennsylvania. Your commitment to the industry is invaluable and appreciated by your partners, including us, the News/Media Alliance. We are always ready to work together to ensure a thriving future for quality journalism.

This is an important time for our industry to be serving readers. Whether it's covering elections, or school board meetings, or soft ball games, we matter. Our responsible reporting on what happens in communities is relied upon by readers, with a number of studies finding local news and government more trusted than other institutions and coverage in our country. Trust matters, quality matters, we matter.

When I open up my phone or paper or magazine, I want to be able to believe what I'm reading. I want to know that the information about my life, my kids' lives, our healthcare, our community, world events, is something I can believe and rely on and go about my day. That's what our publishers provide. You provide the security, the credibility, the dependability, reliable information and trustworthy content.

There will always be times where trust is wavering, there will always be times when some challenge an opinion, but facts are facts, and we need to have a common basis on which we come together and rely on information that is critical to making decisions about our lives. We are entitled to that, and our industry provides that.

There is something about balance and equilibrium that brings stability and success to any industry. I think our industry needs to balance our civic duty to

society and to our readers, and the business aspects that enable us to do what we do. I have watched my member publishers serve communities in a way that simply does not exist in other industries. One particular moment was during the global pandemic when publications removed paywalls. It truly touched my heart to see this act of humanity during an awful time for our country.

In order to provide quality journalism that communities are looking for, we have to pay journalists. It's the life blood of what we do, and sustaining healthy newsrooms is critical to producing quality content. But the ability to monetize our content continues to be circumvented and undermined so that we cannot adequately reinvest in those journalists. That's why we fight. We fight to ensure that you can afford to continue your business—which for so many of you is more than just a business, it's a calling.

Changing the business landscape to allow for a return on our investments is critical to our future, and government should be on our side. Even at times when they don't love critical coverage, I do believe lawmakers value the important role of our industry. And with last week's election results, we are looking forward to working with the incoming Administration and Congress to find areas where government can help facilitate a healthy marketplace.

Our interests are aligned with the Republican agenda, in that we want to create economic and job growth, particularly in the underserved parts of the country. These ideals are aligned with our industry's need for a balanced marketplace and incentives to invest. With tax reform teed up for next year, we see opportunity for our objectives in the advertising market and digital investments leading to growth for our industry's bottom line. Investments in forgotten communities should be encouraged.

And the continuing use of our content by technology companies without payment quite simply amounts to corporate welfare. Stealing our creative content is an unjust enrichment to these Silicon Valley companies that are still living in the wild west free from regulation. We must educate lawmakers and caution against AI running away without oversight. Communities across the country have rightfully expressed concerns and we will work with the new Congress to push our views.

We are equally committed to our core values around protections for journalists and freedom of the press. Rhetoric aside, the safety of our

workforce is not a partisan issue, as reflected by the support for legislation on both sides of the aisle. Freedom of speech is fundamental to any functional society and is also an important value that both parties rely on to push any given message or viewpoint. Upholding this freedom is paramount, and the press cannot be silenced. The Supreme Court has ruled that the same first amendment protections apply to tech and social media, however, there must be more transparency into when and why they silence others. Power to reach billions should come with responsibility.

While we advocate in Washington, D.C. and support advocacy in the states, it is important to remember what all of this is for—the mission of our industry and newsrooms serving communities. Pennsylvania publishers should be proud of the valuable contributions they make towards their communities. Contributions like that of the Philadelphia Inquirer, when it exposed a pattern and history of violent abuse at the Glen Mills Schools, leading to the schools' shutdown and preventing future Pennsylvania children from suffering this abuse.

Or that of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, which reported on the critical condition of emergency medical services in Western Pennsylvania, prompting the governor to propose doubling the funding for these life-saving services.

Or TribLive when it uncovered how sex offenders are living in Pennsylvania nursing homes and other health care facilities often without the knowledge of patients, families or even staff. TribLive reported there are no laws requiring those facilities to tell the public about those offenders, and following these reports, lawmakers have vowed action to protect some of the state's most vulnerable residents by changing the system.

This kind of investigative journalism and reporting goes on every day, every year in Pennsylvania, and around the country. And these stories require investment. Real, human reporters need to interview victims, witnesses, emergency workers, and hold public officials to account. A web crawler bot cannot do this. And these human reporters need and deserve to be paid for their work.

Our industry has been through more than anyone can describe, and I encourage us to come together as a united front to continue to fight for our future. To turn things around, identify ways we can work together and thrive together. Our future depends on it, and I have confidence that we can do it if

we all see the bright future that I know that we can have. I have so much optimism for our industry – people desire what we provide – and I have so much faith that we are on the right side of history.

Thank you again for having me here tonight on this very special occasion. I'm honored to be a part of the evening, and to continue to be a part of our industry. Thank you.