



# SUPPORTING LOCAL NEWS IN MINNESOTA

A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BILL TO STRENGTHEN & SUSTAIN A LOCAL NEWS TALENT PIPELINE

HF4072 | AUTHORED BY REP. JULIE GREENE

**The presence of quality community news is a vital pillar of a healthy civic life. It improves civic engagement, community resilience, social connections and government accountability.**

**The existence alone of community news - regardless of consumer response to it - has been shown to reduce tax bills and the costs of government financing.<sup>1</sup>**

**Current Conditions:** While Minnesota’s local news landscape remains more resilient than in many other states, it has changed dramatically in recent decades. Many of the challenges are well-known.

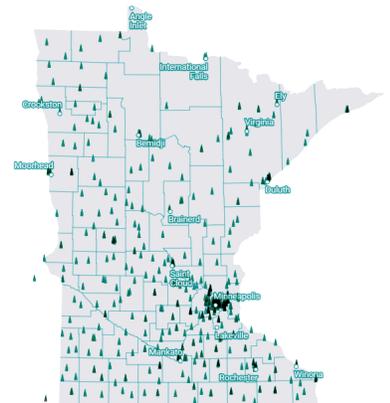
Others - including a talent pipeline issue - are less obvious. Among the most common reasons for local newsroom closures in Minnesota is an aging owner with few opportunities for a successor - even when the operation is financially viable.

**Proposed Support:** Establishment of a statewide program funded by the Workforce Development Fund to place emerging and early-career journalists and media professionals in Minnesota’s community-based newsrooms: in **print, online, on radio and TV and on emerging platforms**. The emerging media professionals will gain skills, mentoring and on-the-job experience. Communities will see an immediate ROI in increased local news coverage. News organizations will be strengthened immediately and in tangible ways, as well as creating opportunities for business succession.

**Proven Models:** The proposed initiative is based on a successful small-scale program administered by the Minnesota News Media Institute that has placed almost 1,000 young journalists in newsrooms of all sizes since 2005. The program was launched with funding from the Pohlad Family Foundation; since 2018, it has been funded entirely by MNI.

**Similar workforce development programs have been successfully implemented by the state** for industries including manufacturing, health care, agriculture, grocery and hospitality.

MN Local News Sources



Source: Minnesota Journalism Center Ecosystem Mapping Project | Updated September 2, 2025

“JUST BEING HERE HAS OPENED MY EYES TO WHAT THE WORLD OF JOURNALISM IS LIKE, AND IT MAKES FOR AN INTERESTING LOOK INTO THE FUTURE.”

- Winona State University senior on his 2025 work experience at the Austin Daily Herald

<sup>1</sup> (“Financing Dies in Darkness,” Notre Dame University and University of Illinois–Chicago, 2018, Gao, Lee & Murphy)



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TO BE ABLE TO HAVE SOMEONE THAT YOU TRUST IN THE NEWSROOM – THAT’S ALSO LEARNING AT THE SAME TIME AND COULD POSSIBLY GO INTO IT AS A CAREER – I THINK THAT’S JUST A BENEFIT FOR EVERYBODY.”

– Eric Johnson, *Austin Daily Herald* editor



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**About MNI:** The Minnesota News Media Institute is a 501(c)3 nonprofit (EIN: 27-1628407) founded in 2011 to provide education, training and professional development for current and future news media professionals; **promote fair and trusted community journalism in Minnesota**; and work to increase government transparency and the public’s understanding of the role and obligation of a free press in our society.

It is governed by a board of directors elected by the print and digital membership of the Minnesota Newspaper Association, and two at-large members appointed by that board. The current at-large members include the Director of the Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Minnesota and the editor emeritus of the *Hutchinson Leader*.

Other MNI programs include

- **Citizen Journalism University**, providing high-level, low-cost, practical training by university faculty and experienced Minnesota editors to prepare engaged community members to report in their own communities.
- **Online Media Campus**, providing live and on-demand online training for media professionals in all disciplines.
- **Fiscal sponsorships and grant award administration** for news organizations statewide
- **Facilitation of regular peer-to-peer professional training** for MNA’s print, online, nonprofit and for-profit members.

“FOR THE MINNESOTA SPOKESMAN-RECORDER, PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROGRAM WOULD ALLOW US TO EXPAND OUR NEWSROOM CAPACITY, MENTOR EARLY-CAREER JOURNALISTS, AND INCREASE COVERAGE OF IMPORTANT ISSUES, INCLUDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES.”

– Tracey Williams-Dillard, *CEO/Publisher, Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, Minneapolis*