

Whereas an informed citizenry depends on accurate and unbiased news reporting to inform the judgment of the people;

Whereas a robust, diverse, and sustainable local news presence leads to civic engagement and the buttressing of democratic norms and practices;

Whereas local news provides vital information on local, State, and national elections to help United States citizens execute their civic responsibility;

Whereas the absence of local news outlets and investigative reporting allows local government corruption and corporate malfeasance to go unchecked;

Whereas local journalists help combat misinformation and disinformation by using their community knowledge and connections to debunk fraudulent or misleading content;

Whereas local cable franchises routinely provide for public educational and government access channels on their systems, and those channels—

(1) offer vital local civic programming that informs communities;

(2) provide news and information not often available on other local broadcast channels or cable;

(3) supplement local journalism; and

(4) at times, are the only source for local news;

Whereas more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the United States citizenry trust local news sources;

Whereas, according to recent research—

(1) the United States has lost nearly 2,900 local print outlets since 2005, which accounts for over $\frac{1}{4}$ of all local print outlets, and is on track to lose $\frac{1}{3}$ of all local print outlets by 2025;

(2) an average of 2.5 local print outlets are being shuttered every week in the United States;

(3) more than 200 of the 3,143 counties and county equivalents in the United States have no local newspaper at all, creating a news shortage for the roughly 4,000,000 residents of those areas;

(4) of the remaining counties in the United States, more than $\frac{1}{2}$ have only 1 newspaper to cover populations ranging from fewer than 1,000 to more than 1,000,000 residents and $\frac{2}{3}$ have no daily newspaper, with fewer than 100 of these counties having a digital substitute;

(5) more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of all newspapers in the United States have changed owners during the past decade, and, in 2020, the 25 largest newspaper ownership companies owned $\frac{1}{3}$ of all daily newspapers, including 70 percent of newspapers that still circulate daily;

(6) of the surviving 6,700 newspapers in the United States, thousands now qualify as “ghost newspapers”, or newspapers with reporting and photography staffs that are so significantly reduced that they can no longer provide much of the breaking news or public service journalism that once informed readers about vital issues in their communities;

(7) rural counties are among the counties most deeply impacted by the loss of local reporting, as more than 500 of the nearly 2,900 newspapers that have closed since 2005 are in rural counties; and

(8) researchers at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism estimate that 228 counties in the United States are at an elevated risk of becoming news deserts in the next 5 years, which would inordinately impact high-poverty areas in the South and Midwest and communities with significant Black, Latino, and Native American populations;

Whereas, while overall employment in newspaper, television, radio, and digital newsrooms dropped by roughly 26 percent, or 30,000 jobs, between 2008 and 2020, the plunge in newspaper newsrooms alone was much worse at 57 percent, or 40,000 jobs, during that same time period;

Whereas the number of news employees in the radio broadcasting industry dropped by 26 percent between 2008 and 2020;

Whereas more than 21,400 media jobs were lost in 2023, the highest number, excluding 2020, since the height of the Great Recession in 2009;

Whereas digital native publications have laid off hundreds of journalists, including over 500 in January 2024 alone, and many of those publications have shuttered during the last year;

Whereas beat reporting, meaning the day-to-day coverage of a particular field that allows a journalist to develop expertise and cultivate sources, has ceased to be a viable career for would-be journalists due to the decimation of newsroom budgets;

Whereas requests submitted under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as “Freedom of Information Act requests”), by local newspapers to local, State, and Federal agencies fell by nearly 50 percent between 2005 and 2010, demonstrating a significant drop in the extent to which local reporters request government records;

Whereas newspapers alone lost more than \$39,800,000,000 in advertising revenue between 2005 and 2020;

Whereas the sponsorship revenue of all-news radio stations dropped by 25 percent between 2019 and 2021;

Whereas there remains a significant gender disparity in newsroom employment, with women comprising approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of staff who are 30 years of age or older;

Whereas women who are local television news anchors and reporters, especially women of color, are often subject to harassment and stalking;

Whereas, across the United States, there are nearly 300 media outlets that primarily serve Black communities, and, in recent years, many of those newspapers have seen—

(1) significant losses in advertising revenue as small businesses in their communities were forced to close; and

(2) declines in circulation due to the closures of businesses in their communities;

Whereas the number of Black journalists working at daily newspapers dropped by 40 percent between 1997 and 2014, more than for any other demographic group, and the exodus of journalists from local news outlets exacerbated amid the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has been disproportionately borne by Black constituencies;

Whereas the number of print media sources published by and for Native American readers has shrunk dramatically in recent years, from 700 media outlets in 1998 to only 200 in 2018;

Whereas Tribally owned news outlets are often dependent on Tribal governments for funding, but most of those outlets lack the policy structure necessary to fully protect journalistic independence;

Whereas a 2018 survey by the Native American Journalists Association found that 83 percent of respondents believed that Native press coverage of Tribal government affairs was sometimes, frequently, or always censored;

Whereas there are more than 620 Latino news media outlets in the United States, including more than 275 independently owned print publications, and collectively these news media outlets primarily rely on a declining advertising revenue base;

Whereas the lack of local news impacts communities that speak languages other than English, which are often excluded from national media coverage;

Whereas investments in local journalism have mainly focused on larger media markets, contributing to inequities and a journalistic divide between affluent and low-income communities;

Whereas student journalists, at both the college and high school level, have stepped in to play an important role reporting on their local communities despite the lack of educational resources and support;

Whereas the Pew Research Center reports that nearly 1 in 10 statehouse reporters are student journalists;

Whereas more than 360 local newsrooms have closed from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 to the present day;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic took a substantial economic toll on the local news industry, contributing to budget cuts, staff layoffs, and scores of newsroom closures, from which the industry has yet to fully recover, as epitomized by mass layoffs and closures at several local news outlets in the 50 States and the District of Columbia in 2023 and early 2024;

Whereas PEN America proposed “a major reimagining of the local news space” in its 2019 call-to-action report, “Losing the News: The Decimation of Local Journalism and the Search for Solutions”, and called on society and the Federal Government to urgently address the alarming demise of local journalism; and

Whereas, half a century ago, Congress perceived that the commercial television industry would not independently provide the educational and public interest broadcasting that was appropriate and necessary for the country, and, informed by an independent report prepared by the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which has since ensured that radio and television include public interest educational and reporting programs using annually appropriated funds: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2024 as “Preserving and Protecting Local News Month”;

(2) affirms that local news serves an essential function in the democracy of the United States;

(3) recognizes local news as a public good; and

(4) acknowledges the valuable contributions of local journalism towards the maintenance of healthy and vibrant communities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 652—DESIGNATING APRIL 2024 AS “SECOND CHANCE MONTH”

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. CRAMER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 652

Whereas every individual is endowed with human dignity and value;

Whereas redemption and second chances are values of the United States;

Whereas millions of citizens of the United States have a criminal record;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of individuals return to their communities from Federal and State prisons every year;

Whereas many individuals returning from Federal and State prisons have paid their debt for committing crimes but still face significant legal and societal barriers (referred to in this preamble as “collateral consequences”);

Whereas collateral consequences for an individual returning from a Federal or State prison are often mandatory and take effect automatically, regardless of—

(1) whether there is a nexus between the crime and public safety;

(2) the seriousness of the crime;

(3) the time that has passed since the individual committed the crime; or

(4) the efforts of the individual to make amends or earn back the trust of the public; Whereas, for individuals returning to their communities from Federal and State prisons, gaining meaningful employment is one of the most significant predictors of successful reentry and has been shown to reduce future criminal activity;

Whereas many individuals who have been incarcerated struggle to find employment and access capital to start a small business because of collateral consequences, which are sometimes not directly related to the offenses the individuals committed or any proven public safety benefit;

Whereas many States have laws that prohibit an individual with a criminal record from working in certain industries or obtaining professional licenses;

Whereas, in addition to employment, education has been shown to be a significant predictor of successful reentry for individuals returning from Federal and State prisons;

Whereas an individual with a criminal record often has a lower level of educational attainment than the general population and has significant difficulty acquiring admission to, and funding for, educational programs;

Whereas an individual who has been convicted of certain crimes is often barred from receiving the financial aid necessary to acquire additional skills and knowledge through some formal education programs;

Whereas an individual with a criminal record—

(1) faces collateral consequences in securing a place to live; and

(2) is often barred from seeking access to public housing;

Whereas collateral consequences can prevent millions of individuals in the United States from contributing fully to their families and communities;

Whereas collateral consequences can have an impact on public safety by contributing to recidivism;

Whereas collateral consequences have particularly impacted underserved communities of color and community rates of employment, housing stability, and recidivism;

Whereas the inability to find gainful employment and other collateral consequences inhibit the economic mobility of an individual with a criminal record, which can negatively impact the well-being of the children and family of the individual for generations;

Whereas the bipartisan First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–391; 132 Stat. 5194) was signed into law on December 21, 2018, to increase opportunities for individuals incarcerated in Federal prisons to participate in meaningful recidivism reduction programs and prepare for their second chances;

Whereas the programs authorized by the Second Chance Act of 2007 (Public Law 110–199; 122 Stat. 657)—

(1) have provided reentry services to more than 164,000 individuals in 49 States and the District of Columbia since the date of enactment of the Act; and

(2) were reauthorized by the First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–391; 132 Stat. 5194);

Whereas the anniversary of the death of Charles Colson, who used his second chance following his incarceration for a Watergate-related crime to found Prison Fellowship, the largest program in the United States that provides outreach to prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, falls on April 21; and

Whereas the designation of April as “Second Chance Month” may contribute to—

(1) increased public awareness about—

(A) the impact of collateral consequences; and

(B) the need for closure for individuals with a criminal record who have paid their debt; and

(2) opportunities for individuals, employers, congregations, and communities to extend second chances to those individuals: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2024 as “Second Chance Month”;;

(2) honors the work of communities, governmental institutions, nonprofit organizations, congregations, employers, and individuals to remove unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals with criminal records from becoming productive members of society; and

(3) calls upon the people of the United States to observe “Second Chance Month” through actions and programs that—

(A) promote awareness of those unnecessary legal and social barriers; and

(B) provide closure for individuals with criminal records who have paid their debts to the community.

SENATE RESOLUTION 653—RECOGNIZING THE 54TH ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH DAY AND THE LEADERSHIP OF ITS FOUNDER, SENATOR GAYLORD NELSON

Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. KING, Ms. DUCKWORTH, and Ms. BUTLER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works:

S. RES. 653

Whereas Earth Day is observed annually around the world to demonstrate support for preserving, protecting, and defending the environment, the planet, and the inhabitants of the planet;

Whereas Senator Gaylord Nelson, a native of Clear Lake, Wisconsin—

(1) established Earth Day as an event and movement led by young people;

(2) is recognized as one of the leading environmentalists of the 20th century; and

(3) received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his public leadership;

Whereas the Earth Day movement established by Senator Gaylord Nelson helped launch an era of international environmental awareness and activism;

Whereas young individuals were critical in the organization and mobilization of 20,000,000 individuals on the first Earth Day in 1970, making that celebration the largest environmental grassroots event in history at that time;

Whereas ongoing environmental degradation, accelerating climate change, and increasingly severe weather events threaten the well-being and livelihoods of the individuals of the United States and individuals around the world, including—

(1) coastal communities, which are especially vulnerable and are experiencing erosion, flooding, and pollution; and

(2) rural and agricultural communities, which are facing increased risk of drought, diseases, pests, and soil degradation;

Whereas pollution, environmental degradation, and the climate crisis are generational justice issues that disproportionately impact young individuals and future generations, who will face difficulties accessing clean water and clean air;

Whereas low-income communities and communities of color continue to face disproportionate harm from climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation;

Whereas multiple national and international scientific reports have concluded

that the climate crisis is a threat to the planet that requires urgent action;

Whereas the first Earth Day spurred broad support for environmental conservation and contributed to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the enactment of bipartisan legislation with bedrock Federal environmental protections, including the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.), the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.);

Whereas Congress enacted once-in-a-generation legislation, including the Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law 117–169) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58), which make historic investments in clean water and clean air;

Whereas the United States has experienced a youth-led resurgence in environmental and climate activism that has led to hundreds of thousands of individuals in the United States demanding climate action; and

Whereas the mission and purpose of Earth Day remain relevant in 2024, for a new generation to face environmental challenges that lie ahead: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes April 22, 2024, as the 54th anniversary of Earth Day; and

(2) commends the leadership and vision of the founder of Earth Day, Senator Gaylord Nelson.

SENATE RESOLUTION 654—EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT THE ELEVATED LEVELS OF LEAD IN ONE-THIRD OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN AND THE GLOBAL CAUSES OF LEAD EXPOSURE, AND CALLING FOR THE INCLUSION OF LEAD EXPOSURE PREVENTION IN GLOBAL HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS ABROAD

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 654

Whereas the heavy metal lead is a common element found in the Earth's crust and is a known toxin;

Whereas children are particularly vulnerable to lead exposure due to lead's harmful effects on the brain and nervous system development;

Whereas, according to the World Health Organization, people can be exposed to lead through the inhalation of lead particles produced from the burning of leaded materials, including during recycling and smelting;

Whereas exposure to lead also occurs through the ingestion of dust, paint flakes, water, and food contaminated with lead;

Whereas, over time, significant exposure to lead and the accumulation of lead in the body can result in lead poisoning, a severe, life-threatening condition that requires medical attention;

Whereas, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), approximately 1 in 3 children, up to approximately 800,000,000 globally, have blood lead levels at or above the threshold for intervention in a child's environment recommended by the World Health Organization;

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to lead exposure;