

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 13, 2018

The Honorable David S. Johanson
Chairman
United States International Trade Commission
500 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20436

Dear Chairman Johanson:

We write regarding the International Trade Commission's active investigation into uncoated groundwood paper from Canada (Inv. No. 701-TA-584 and 731-TA-1382). We urge you to fully consider the impacts of the countervailing and antidumping duties on hundreds of thousands of jobs at American newspapers, book publishers, and printers.

Joseph Pulitzer famously said, "Our Republic and its press will rise and fall together." There is a clear link between the strength of our nation's democracy and its free press. The journalism industry is grappling with a challenging economic landscape, including changes in how people access news and rapid shifts in advertising and other financial supports, factors which are exacerbated in smaller cities and towns and rural areas.

On top of all of this, the newspaper industry is now facing duties on Canadian newsprint and changes to the cost of shipping, which could well be catastrophic for publishers in the southwest. The cost of newsprint has increased by over 20 percent since NORPAC filed its petition in August 2017. These changes have already resulted in lost jobs and decreased reporting on local and national issues. We urge the Commission to revisit the domestic industry's support of this petition and consider the adverse impact to domestic manufacturers and publishers as you make a final determination.

Not only the newspaper industry but U.S. paper manufacturers themselves and the industry's primary trade group oppose the tariffs and have found that they will harm producers. The industry's customer base, the U.S. printers and publishers, are facing escalating costs as the price of newsprint increases. They argue the total amount of newsprint produced in the U.S. will decrease at an even faster pace than its current downward trend due to these tariffs. We believe that this directly contradicts ITC's preliminary determination that antidumping and countervailing duties will serve to benefit the industry in the United States.

This week, the STOPP Coalition including the New Mexico Press Association announced that more than 10,000 Americans representing all 50 states, signed a petition urging the ITC to reverse these tariffs because of the harm they cause to the U.S. paper and publishing industries: “The imposition of antidumping and countervailing duties ... would needlessly exacerbate serious challenges faced by local newspapers and printers and their paper suppliers throughout the United States,” the petition stated. “Ultimately, the total amount of newsprint produced in the U.S. will decrease at an even faster pace than its current downward trend due to these tariffs.” A copy of the group’s press release and petition is attached.

We agree with hundreds of the petition’s signatories from New Mexico in their call to protect a free press and ensure robust journalism to strengthen our democracy. Beyond specific direct and indirect job losses, the closure of local newspapers damages the fabric of American communities. A free press and informed citizens at the local level are at the foundation of democracy. In many towns and rural communities in New Mexico, the local newspaper is the chief source of information that affects daily life for citizens, and keeps the community connected with one another. Local papers hold public officials accountable and preserve a sense of community by reporting on civic activities, high school sports, and issues relevant to local citizens.


Again, we urge you to use your existing authorities and discretion to fully analyze and revisit your initial determinations of the industry’s support of this petition and to consider the adverse impact to domestic manufacturers, newspapers and publishers as you make a final determination.

Sincerely,


Tom Udall
United States Senator


Martin Heinrich
United States Senator


Steve Pearce
U.S. Representative


Ben Ray Luján
U.S. Representative


Michelle Lujan Grisham
U.S. Representative