



June 19, 2017

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie
Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney
Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto
Senate Minority Leader Thomas H. Kean Jr.
Assembly Minority Leader Jon M. Bramnick
Senate Budget Chairman Paul Sarlo
Assembly Budget Chairman Gary Schaer

New Jersey State Legislature
State House Annex
P.O. Box 068
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068

Re: New Jersey Civic Information Consortium Bill

Dear Gov. Christie, Senate President Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Prieto, Senate Minority Leader Kean, Assembly Minority Leader Bramnick, Senate Budget Chairman Sarlo, and Assembly Budget Chairman Schaer:

We the undersigned residents and organizations of New Jersey believe that strong local news and information are essential to any community working to determine its future. With accurate news and information, residents are better able to make informed decisions about public services, education, jobs, business and so much more.

Thousands of newsroom jobs have disappeared and dozens of news outlets have shut down throughout New Jersey over the last decade.¹ These cuts have harmed communities by reducing the amount of news and civic information residents have access to.

In the face of this crisis, we urge you to pass A4933/S3303 forming the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC), which would invest in ideas to strengthen local news, community information, civic technology and civic engagement across New Jersey. This innovative new way of funding news and information would be built on collaboration among four leading research universities, digital innovators

and everyday people, and would be the first of its kind in the nation.

Evidence shows that when local news disappears, civic participation drops,² corruption increases³ and lawmakers are less responsive to the needs of their constituents.⁴ NJCIC would cultivate new ways of informing our communities and shedding light on the lives of our most marginalized residents.

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium represents our state's opportunity to demonstrate a transformative new model, utilizing a portion of the \$332 million in revenue recently earned from the FCC's auction of two of the state's old public-media stations. These stations were created to serve the public interest; it's only right that the funds from their sale be used to rebuild local news and information.

NJCIC would seek out, evaluate and invest in proposals in partnership with the media industry, technology sector, community organizations, and four university partners: Montclair State University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University and Rutgers University.

The four partnering universities would have resources to implement a range of noteworthy projects. For example, these are some of the innovative ideas that surfaced at community forums held across the state:

- * Creating small digital newsrooms within partner universities
- * Hosting journalism and media-business trainings with residents interested in building new media projects that serve their communities
- * Giving residents greater access to information about their local government
- * Creating fellowships for a diverse cohort of young journalists who would work for at least two years with established news organizations to cover local news in underserved areas

The rewards would be significant — beginning with an engaged, invigorated population better positioned to spark positive change.

Our state prides itself on being a place where people from all walks of life come to raise families, build careers and help solve some of the world's greatest challenges. The hundreds of millions received from the recent sale of old public-media stations presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give New Jerseyans the news and information they need to participate fully in our democracy. We strongly urge you to pass A4933/S3303 using a portion of this revenue to fund the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium.

Sincerely,

Action Together New Jersey
Alliance for Community Media
Alliance for Media Arts and Culture

Anti-Poverty Network of NJ
Asbury Park Education Justice Collective
Bergen County NAACP
Bergen Volunteer Center
Citizens Campaign
coLab Arts
Color Of Change
Environmental NJ
Food and Justice at Trinity Episcopal Church of Asbury Park
Free Press Action Fund
IDEA Performing Arts Center
League of Women Voters of NJ
Media Mobilizing Project
Monarch Housing Associates, Inc.
Network for Responsible Public Policy
Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc.
New Jersey Policy Perspective
New Labor
New Jersey Public Interest Research Group

HISPANIC COALITION OF CIVIC & FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Action 21 Immigrants Rights Advocacy Group
Colombian American Congress
Dominican American Leadership Council
Ecuadorian-American Chamber of Commerce
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Camden County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Essex County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Hudson County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Middlesex County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Monmouth County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Passaic County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Ocean County
Evangelical Hispanic Pastors Association of Union County
Guatemalan Merchant Association of NJ
Hispanic American Commerce Association of Hudson County
Hispanic American Political Action Committee
Hispanics for Progress of the Oranges
Hispanic Women Entrepreneurs and Networking Association of Essex, Hudson, Passaic and Union Counties (*representing over 300 women entrepreneurs*)
LAP Latino Alliance for Progress
Latin American Democratic Association

Latino Chamber of Commerce of Essex County
Peruvian American Coalition of New Jersey (*representing over 15 civic and business organizations*)
Newark Hispanic Merchant Association
Newark Hispanic Pastors Association

HISPANIC MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

Collectively the following local media organizations cover all 21 counties in the State of New Jersey:

Campana News (serving New Jersey's Peruvian community)
Colgren Entertainment Production (Colombian American; radio, print news publishing and online news)
Dominican Times News
Ecuador News & Newark Now (Vicente Aviles)
El Americano News
El Coqui-Puerto Rican/Latino News
El Kan Cable Show (Fios)
El Nacional News (Alejandro Roman)
En La Cosa.com
International Association of Hispanic Journalists & Entertainment
Latino Street Newspaper
Laz TV (Jhonny Granizo)
Negocios Hispanos USA
Paginas Libre Con Carlos Felice
Poder Hispano News
Poder Latino USA News
Punto de Encuentro
Quisqueya News Internacional
Radio Vision Cristian

1. "Mass Journalism Layoffs in New Jersey Couldn't Come at a Worse Time," Free Press, Sept. 16, 2016: <http://www.freepress.net/blog/2016/09/16/mass-journalism-layoffs-new-jersey-couldnt-come-worse-time>
2. "Is the Death of Newspapers the End of Good Citizenship?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 11, 2012: <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2012/1111/Is-the-death-of-newspapers-the-end-of-good-citizenship>
3. "Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers (Hello to a New Era of Corruption)," *The New Republic*, March 4, 2009: <https://newrepublic.com/article/64252/goodbye-the-age-newspapers-hello-new-era-corruption>
4. James M. Snyder & David Strömberg, 2010. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability," *Journal of Political Economy*, University of Chicago Press, vol. 118(2), pages 355-408, 04.