

NEWSPAPER, FROM 2A

There is an important difference between news and public information. Reporters should decide what news is. Government agencies should not expect a news story to replace a communications budget.

If an agency needs the public to understand a tax program, election, health service, school initiative, or government program, it should budget to communicate that information through trusted local media.

The same is true for nonprofits.

A news release is not a communications plan. If telling people about available services or important community work is part of the mission, telling that story should also be part of the budget.

Some states have started to act, creating tax credits and other programs to help protect local journalism jobs. Congress should move, too.

The Community News and Small Business Support Act would help keep or expand local coverage in rural communities while also helping small businesses advertise in their local market.

That matters because local stores are fighting their own battle.

They cannot compete online against Amazon, national chains, and big-box retailers with enormous advertising budgets and sophisticated digital marketing operations.

Helping small businesses advertise locally could strengthen downtown businesses and local news coverage at the same time.

Saving local news is not about nostalgia.

It is about whether communities can still make informed decisions, preserve their shared history, and hold those in power accountable.

A community without a newspaper does not become better informed. It becomes more dependent on rumor, social media, press releases, and outside narratives.



Robb Hicks

It becomes less informed, less connected, and easier to mislead. Accountability weakens. Civic engagement declines. And gradually, a community loses part of its shared identity.

Newspapers are not dead. But they are fragile and under pressure.

People still read newspapers. They still value public notices. They still rely on local newspapers to understand their communities.

In other words, they still matter.

Maybe now more than ever.

Robb Hicks is a third-generation Wyoming newspaperman and publisher of the Buffalo Bulletin. In 2025, Hicks, his wife Jen Sieve-Hicks, and Rob and Shaylee Mortimore stepped in after eight Wyoming newspapers abruptly closed. Together, they reopened the papers, restored local news coverage, and kept those communities from becoming news deserts. Today, their growing newspaper group is focused on finding sustainable ways to preserve strong, locally owned journalism in rural communities.



with Slim Randles

Elfego Baca was a handsome young sheriff's deputy when he fought a famous two-day gun battle against 80 cowhands from the Texas John Slaughter ranch. He survived, and four cowboys didn't. He then went on to a law enforcement career in Socorro, New Mexico, and then became an attorney. But Elfego wouldn't be Elfego if he just filed briefs. Oh no. This man, who was the subject of a Walt Disney film half a century later, became a lawyer you could write home about. His clientele stretched from Albuquerque to El Paso, and he gave practicing law the same... flamboyance... he gave to law enforcement. One of the best stories of Elfego's lawyer days...and please remember these days were often alcohol-enhanced... concerned a client in El Paso. Baca was in Albuquerque at the time, so the client wired him, saying, "I'm in jail in El Paso and charged with murder. Please come." And Elfego wired back. "Leaving immediately with three eyewitnesses."

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