

# ASSEMBLYMEMBER WICKS SECURES AGREEMENT WITH STATE, MAJOR TECH COMPANIES TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF CALIFORNIA JOURNALISTS

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On Wednesday, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks announced the establishment of a first-in-the-nation partnership with the State, news publishers, major tech companies and philanthropy, unveiling a pair of multi-year initiatives to provide ongoing financial support to newsrooms across California and launch a National AI Accelerator. Together, these new partnerships will provide nearly \$250 million in public and private funding over the next five years, with the majority of funding going to newsrooms. The goal is to front-load \$100 million in the first year to kick-start the efforts. The total investment could increase over the next several years if additional funding from private or state sources becomes available. The post Assemblymember Wicks Secures Agreement with State, Major Tech Companies to Support the Work of California Journalists first appeared on Post News Group.

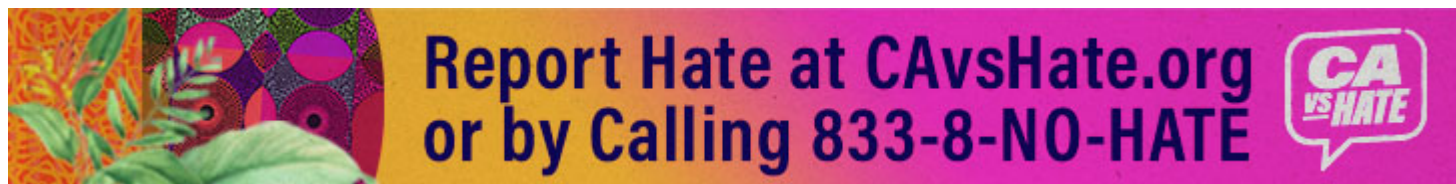
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By Erin Ivie

Special to The Post



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"This agreement represents a major breakthrough in ensuring the survival of newsrooms and bolstering local journalism across California — leveraging substantial tech industry resources without imposing new taxes on Californians," said Governor Gavin Newsom. "The deal not only provides funding to support hundreds of new journalists but helps rebuild a robust and dynamic California press corps for years to come, reinforcing the vital role of journalism in our democracy."

Assemblymember Wicks authored AB 886 to help ensure the sustainability of local journalism, as news outlets across the country are downsizing and closing at alarming rates.

A Northwestern University study published last year found an average of two-and-a-half newspapers in the United States close every week, and that our nation has lost two-thirds of its newspaper journalists since 2005. California has lost more than 100 newspapers in the last decade alone.

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The new suite of initiatives includes multi-faceted support for publishers across California to address challenges that have impacted the depth and breadth of news coverage in the state. They will help ensure the sustainability of existing and new online publications – with an emphasis on small, local outlets and community-facing journalism.

"As technology and innovation advance, it is critical that California continues to champion the vital role of journalism in our democracy," said Wicks. "This partnership represents a cross-sector commitment to supporting a free and vibrant press, empowering local news outlets up and down

the state to continue in their essential work. This is just the beginning. I remain committed to finding even more ways to support journalism in our state for years to come."

California news publishers will be the beneficiaries of a News Transformation Fund, to be administered by the UC Berkeley School of Journalism, providing financial resources that preserve and expand California-based journalism.

The funding will include contributions from technology platforms and the State of California, supporting innovative new investments that promote local journalism. The funding will support California-based state and local news organizations, particularly those serving California local news deserts, underserved and underrepresented communities, and outlets that prioritize California coverage.

Funding for the initiative would be complemented by direct support from the State, helping news organizations keep and grow newsroom staff and offsetting the costs of producing local news and information.

"A vibrant press is crucial for strong communities and a healthy democracy. This is a first step toward what we hope will become a comprehensive program to sustain local news in the long term, and we will push to see it grow in future years," said California News Publishers Association CEO Chuck Champion and Board Chair Julie Makinen.

Partners in this initiative also reiterated their strong commitment to strengthening newsroom and ownership diversity for ethnic and underserved communities. The Governor also announced his support for AB 1511 (Santiago), which aims to increase the state's ongoing commitment to place official marketing, advertising and/or outreach advertising with local and underrepresented media outlets.

"Ethnic and community media outlets in California have a long history of serving as trusted messengers of culturally responsive news to historically underrepresented and underserved communities," said Assemblymember Miguel Santiago.

Additionally, researchers and businesses will have access to new resources to explore the use of AI to tackle some of the most complex challenges facing society and strengthen the workforce through a new National AI Innovation Accelerator.

This will be administered in collaboration with a private nonprofit and will provide organizations across industries and communities — from journalism, to the environment, to racial equity and beyond — with financial resources and other support to experiment with AI to assist them in their work.

The AI accelerator will empower organizations with the new technology and complement the work of the Journalism Fund by creating new tools to help journalists access and analyze public information.

"This fund will help news outlets and journalists adapt to a changing landscape with new tools and funding to embrace emerging technologies," said Regina Wilson, executive director of California Black Media. "This is especially helpful for ethnic and community media which is comprised largely of under-resourced family businesses whose strongest connections are to their community."

*Erin Ivie is the director of Communications, office of Assemblymember Buffy Wicks.*



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**There are no comments yet.**