

REP. BRIAN HIGGINS TESTIMONY

Chairman Johanson and members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to share my views on the investigation regarding the import of Canadian uncoated groundwood paper. I believe an affirmative final determination from the International Trade Commission will harm the production and circulation of local newspapers in my district.

The freedom of the press is one of the central tenants of the first amendment of the constitution. Newspapers have always been an integral part of how Americans are able to achieve the full aims of this freedom – through the promotion of a marketplace of ideas. Newspapers have availed the public with essential information about their neighborhoods. Newspapers are unique in comparison to other mediums in that they are the most cited source citizens use for news about their local town or city, arts and culture, or schools and education. This is why I am concerned about the imposition of duties on newsprint that this petition would result in.

Specifically, the increased costs on newspapers that would result from this petition could have a direct impact on my community's access to information. Even the signaling of potential duties has been problematic.

Since the petition was filed in August 2017, New York printers and publishers have had to contemplate or implement cost cutting measures such as reducing pages and eliminating sections.

The largest local newspaper in my district, the Buffalo News, is experiencing increased newsprint costs of about \$600,000 a month due to the preliminary duties and its effect of constricting supply. Newsprint is the second highest cost for the News, right behind personnel, and compounded with their major supplier now leaving the market – The Buffalo News is facing an untenable situation.

Other local newspapers, including the Niagara Gazette and the Bee Newspapers, are also bracing for the impact of this investigation.

Newspapers across the country are facing a challenging business environment.

Some papers are already preparing for reductions in their workforce and this is not limited to simply journalists. Both President Christopher Shelton of the Communications Workers of America and President James Hoffa of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in their letters to the Commission noted that an affirmative determination could affect tens of thousands of workers who are pressman, graphic designers, copy editors, mailers or drivers.

Local newspapers are also confronting a decline in newspaper circulation, readership and print advertising due to increased internet competition. While some have been successful in cultivating digital content, increasing digital subscriptions, and procuring online advertising, others will be more exposed to the risk of shutting their doors.

Duties this Commission could affirm would accelerate this decline and may leave portions of my community without access to vital information about our homes and neighborhoods.

I am offering my testimony before you today because I truly believe in the thorough, fact-based investigative process of the Department of Commerce and the Commission. So it is my hope that you seriously consider the perspective that I have offered in making your final determination regarding uncoated groundwood paper.