

# **MoveOn Media Action**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **“MoveOn Media Action” Mobilizing Against Staff Cuts at Four More Tribune Co. Owned Newspapers**

**Campaign Adds Papers in NY, PA, CT, VA  
To Last Week’s Four State Kick-Off**

*Pushback against staff cuts will protect “strong watchdog journalism”*

MoveOn Media Action announced today an extension of its campaign against newspaper staff cuts to include four new Tribune Company readership areas after a successful kick-off last week.

As Saturday’s Los Angeles Times reported, within 24 hours over 27,000 members of the public signed online petitions opposing newspaper staff cuts in readership areas of the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, and Baltimore Sun.

On Monday and Tuesday, petition drives were launched opposing staff cuts at Newsday, the Hartford Courant, the Daily Press (Newport News, Va.), and the Morning Call (Allentown, Pa.). Despite contributing to the large profit of the Tribune Company’s publishing division, these eight local newspapers were forced to cut over 650 staff this year.

“As corporate owners in Chicago reap large profits...there is no excuse for them to force our paper to abandon its responsibility to deliver strong watchdog journalism to the public,” reads each petition, which is located on the front page of MoveOn.org.

Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism and a former Los Angeles Times reporter, said in Saturday’s Los Angeles Times that MoveOn Media Action’s support should be welcome for beleaguered journalists.

“One of the greatest debates in journalism right now is who is there to advocate on behalf of journalism inside of publicly traded corporations, where the fiduciary responsibility focuses on shareholders and earnings,” Rosenstiel said.

MoveOn Media Action is a new project of MoveOn.org Civic Action – a 501(c)(4) distinct from MoveOn.org’s political action committee. MoveOn Media Action empowers regular people to reform the media and fight back when news organizations

abandon their journalistic duty to be a vigilant watchdog for the public. It was formed because MoveOn.org members felt this was an important priority for the organization.

“These staff cuts mean watered-down coverage of local, state, and national news,” said Noah T. Winer, MoveOn Media Action Director. “Politicians and corporations who should be held accountable by vigilant watchdog journalism will instead be covered by a staff that is stretched too thin.”

Online petitions are the first step of a consistent campaign aimed at the Tribune Company, and potentially other corporate media owners. Other actions may include person-to-person petition drives in local communities, local petition deliveries, phone calls to the Tribune Company, and actions aimed at influencing stockholders.

“Our big goal is to raise public awareness of this issue and give regular people a way to fight for good journalism,” said Adam Green, Civic Communications Director for MoveOn.org Civic Action. “This is just the opening salvo. At the end of the day, corporate news owners will have no choice but to consider the public’s desire for strong watchdog journalism in their business decisions.”

In e-mails launching the petitions, MoveOn Media Action highlighted the testimonials of several media insiders to show how the Tribune Company is mandating local staff cuts despite large profits in their publishing division – to the detriment of good journalism.

These testimonials included:

- On CNN, media reporter Howard Kurtz reported on staff cuts and asked, “Does this mean the papers are losing money? Don't be naive. It means their double-digit profit margins aren't high enough to satisfy Wall Street.” (Citation: <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=1225> )
- Former *Los Angeles Times* deputy opinion editor Steve Wasserman wrote, “Tribune Co. insists that the paper deliver annual operating profit margins nearer 25% or 26% than its more customary return of around 15% or 16%. (Last year...the paper reaped an operating profit margin of about 20%, a figure that failed to satisfy the Chicago money men.)” (Citation: <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=1224> )
- Michael Hill, the *Baltimore Sun's* guild unit chair said the *Sun's* 12<sup>th</sup> round of cuts in 8 years was surprising "when you are dealing with a place that makes as much money as this place does." Cutting staff in the newsroom "would obviously affect how work is done," he said. (Citation: <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=1200> )
- An *Orlando Weekly* tongue-in-cheek column opined, “with operating profits [at the Tribune Company] only at \$585.9 million for the publishing division so far this year—up \$93.6 million from the same time last year, by the way—it's only reasonable to expect that some poor schlubs at the Sentinel must fall on their swords. It's the only way.” (Cite: <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=1223&id=> )

Saturday's Los Angeles Times article, "MoveOn Protests Cuts In Tribune Co. Newsrooms" is located at: <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=1222>

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