



The saying “No news is good news” is rarely — if ever — true.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, that statement is “said to make someone feel less worried when they have not received information about someone or something, because if something bad had happened, they would have been told about it.”

How many times have you found out too late that a loved one or friend has been battling cancer or going through a bitter divorce? There were things you wished you could have said or support you could have given. The “No news is good news” philosophy can leave you with regrets.

What about the headlines that alert tax-paying newspaper readers to decisions their local officials are making that affect their property, their health, the communities where they live? Consider how important dedicated, thorough newspaper reporting was to uncovering the Flint water crisis or the scope of Larry Nassar’s abuse. What if your neighborhood has a PFAS problem or your mother is in a nursing home where COVID-19 is running rampant but numbers aren’t being reported. Would you want to stick your head in the sand because, after all, “No news is good news?”

Democracy demands journalism. People who want to know what’s going on in their villages, towns, counties and the state demand accurate and accountable journalism. Decision-makers who rely on federal and state funds demand trustworthy journalism. Lawmakers dedicated to open and honest government demand journalism. Democracy is government by the people. And in order for people to make their voices heard at all levels of government, they must be informed by a fair source. That’s why good journalism is critical.

Newspapers do tell positive, informative, sometimes light-hearted stories that are important. But one of journalism's main responsibilities is to make sure elected officials and key decision-makers follow the law, handle tax dollars responsibly and represent the people who elected them.

Most local newspaper teams can list a handful of stories they have uncovered, informing readers of corruption and negligence that ultimately resulted in public outcry and significant changes to the way things are done. Newspapers understand that people want their voices to be heard, but that they also have limited time and resources to attend meetings, dig for documents and challenge elected officials on issues that are important to them as taxpayers.

This demand for democracy is why the Michigan Press Association spends so much time on issues such as fighting for transparency by making sure the Freedom Of Information Act applies at all levels of government; by making sure the Open Meetings Act is followed at all levels of government; and by fighting to ensure public notices are published in local newspapers and online so constituents know when important decisions are going to be discussed and made.

We understand that people sometimes need a break from the headlines, especially after events of late. We understand the news can be heavy, overwhelming and even disheartening.

But we encourage you to be careful with subscribing to the "No news is good news" philosophy. Information is power and if you don't find a way to keep yourself plugged in to a reliable source of what's happening — at least in your local community — decisions will be made with input from and by other people. And your voice will be too late.

