

1st Amendment Essay

Eric Reingardt

Greenwood Community High School

There was a time not too long ago when the American people had a sincere trust in the news media. Journalists, after all, were the eyes, ears and mouths of the public. We like to cite the days of daring investigative reporters, mettlesome war correspondents and principled yet unbiased anchors, as the golden age of the free press and the pinnacle of journalistic integrity.

Today, we find ourselves amidst the most polarized and divisive political climate this country has seen since the years leading up to the Civil War. Unfortunately, you will not find today's Cronkites, Murrows or Bernsteins working at a national-level media outlet. The last bastion of journalistic integrity can be found in the often overlooked, but rarely discredited; local news.

It has become too easy to be caught up in the sensationalized drama of national politics that we forget the relevance it should have to the daily lives of Americans. Consider the groundbreaking events that spark the heated discussions on the presidential debate stage or the Senate floor in the first place. The out-of-touch journalists in the national media like to talk theory and hypotheticals, but it is the local journalists who witness firsthand the effects of poor legislating and faulty government leadership.

When there is a mass shooting, the local news is first to respond. When there is an epidemic or natural disaster the local news is first to respond. When the American people are cheated by the government the local news is first to respond.

Our local journalists are obligated to protect our communities, because they are as much a part of them as we are. These journalists drive on the same roads as us, buy from the same

stores as us and abide by the same laws as us. They want safe neighborhoods, good schools for their kids and they want the highest quality of life they can get. Their hopes and their fears are one in the same with ours.

There is a reason the press is considered the “fourth estate”. Laws born in the legislature, approved by the executive and deemed Constitutional by the court will impact the lives of every American. In exchange, the American people have the right to be informed and the right to speak up against irresponsible governing. Our nation’s local news is a testament to those rights.