

# Harms

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represents a historic change. A daily newspaper was for generations considered to be the most informed and knowledgeable source for keeping the public apprised of the current events of government entities, businesses and sports franchises. Staff members were often revered, respected and trusted by the public they served to deliver on-time, accurate reporting and to hold public bodies and officials accountable through a transparent format.

But with the inception of the internet and digital media, it has become all too easy to skim the headlines on a search engine and forgo actually reading the news.

Whereas in prior generations there was thoughtful, informed debate, today, in many cases, the loudest voice wins regardless of truth or accuracy. What may have seemed like a natural evolution for the newspaper industry has become a digital behemoth with many unforeseen pitfalls.

As Reed Anfinson, former president of the National Newspaper Association (NNA) and current newspaper owner and publisher, tells it, news sources on the internet tend to divide their readership: "News on the internet doesn't unite — it divides. It creates an environment of misinformation."

Anfinson said that regardless of the viewpoint of the story, opposing points of view too often begin "shouting" at each other and the reporting itself can get lost in the frenzy. In reality, most of those who intend to rely on the internet, or digital resources, for their news simply never get around to actually reading the stories that cover the important topics facing communities and the nation.

"There is no doubt that if print journalism disappears, so will a citizen's focus on and knowledge of local civic news. Left to self-motivation to seek news out on the internet, many will put it aside for later and never return to it," Anfinson wrote in a recent column of the subject.

## THE DAWN OF NEWS DESERTS

News deserts can be most aptly defined as a geographical area that has few or no news media outlets and receives little news

coverage — if any at all.

Like most of the rest of the country, local newspapers in Nebraska have taken hits, too. In all, 16 newspapers have permanently closed in the state since 2004, with 12 of those having shut their doors since 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proliferation of news deserts isn't only a cause for concern in Nebraska. In fact, the situation in other states is worse. Around the country, increasing numbers of community-based daily and weekly news providers are scaling back production, limiting coverage or closing their doors.

It hasn't always been this way. For an extended period of time, the American newspaper industry set the benchmarks for news coverage and journalistic excellence.

Perhaps the most profound example of this can be found in the Watergate scandal of the early 1970s.

As Robert Williams, director of communications for the National Newspaper Association points out, without local news reporting, a significant chapter in the nation's history may have never been brought to the attention of the American public.

"Imagine where we'd be without news reporting during the early '70s; how would the public have known without the reporting in several newspapers at the time?"

Due to the investigative reporting work of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the Watergate scandal was uncovered and some of Richard Nixon's staff members' wrongdoing was exposed. Nixon himself resigned from office.

There are plenty of other examples about the accountability role undertaken by community newspapers. One can be found in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where its community newspaper, the Times-Leader, was one of the first news sources in 2009 to expose the actions of Judges Michael Conahan and Mark Ciavarella. They were both embroiled in what became known as the "Kids for Cash" scandal in which judges were handing out unreasonably harsh sentences to juvenile offenders in exchange for monetary kickbacks from nonprofit youth detention centers.

The Times-Leader received national recognition for uncovering and reporting on

the scandal. If not for the reporting work done by the newspaper, the residents of the community of 44,000 might not have ever been aware of the crimes taking place.

The NNA's Williams said it's not just the emergence of digital media that is hurting the local paper, but also the reality that many papers can't sustain the overhead costs if advertising revenue and subscriber numbers decline, too. When cutbacks are necessary, news coverage suffers.

As of the mid-1980s, America's newspapers held a combined national circulation of just under 65 million readers, according to Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think-tank that analyzes societal and cultural trends across the nation. This time period was considered the height of the age of print news media in the U.S.

Around the mid-1990s, though, circulation totals began to steadily drop; layoffs followed, and American communities began to see their news coverage diminished, or disappear completely.

## HARMFUL EFFECTS

Today, combined circulation among printed newspapers in country is 24.2 million, a 63% decline since the 1980s. This unprecedented drop in circulation means that many newspapers have simply vanished, unable to survive in an ever-changing technological and social climate.

According to a recent study conducted by Northwestern University, by 2025 one-third or more of U.S. newspapers will have been lost since their peak in the 1980s and early '90s. It's worth noting that the void that's been left in the wake of the decline in newspapers has far-reaching effects beyond that of lost jobs.

Statistically speaking, in communities where there is no local source for comprehensive news coverage, poverty rates run higher and median income and graduation rates run lower. In contrast, communities with a local news outlet are often healthier, more active and less violent.

That's why Anfinson said it's crucial for local, community newspapers to survive.

"Nothing replaces the community newspaper's ability to hold those in power accountable," Anfinson said.

# State

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28 counties without a newspaper, while the tally is 22 counties in Texas. Nebraska, meanwhile, partly due to its sparse population, has seven counties without a newspaper.

Madison County has three weekly papers, along with the Daily News. But the county did witness changes for the publications in Meadow Grove — merging with the nearby Tilden Citizen — and Newman Grove in recent history.

More than a dozen other newspapers — 16 total, all of which were weekly — experienced a similar fate, marking a 9% decrease in the number of publications available in Ne-

braska between 2004 and 2019. As of 2023, Nebraska is home to 150 newspapers, including 10 dailies, according to the Nebraska Press Association.

The closing of newspapers doesn't tell the whole story. Elsewhere in Nebraska, for example, some daily newspapers have reduced how frequently a printed edition is published, although daily online updates are available.

Patrick Murphy, publisher of the Humphrey Democrat, also owned the Newman Grove Reporter from 2015 to 2018 before he sold its subscription list to the Albion News, which now includes Newman Grove news as part of its publication.

After graduating from Wayne State College, Murphy was on the staff of newspapers in David City and Columbus, among others. "I enjoyed it from the beginning," he said.

He eventually became interested in purchasing the weekly newspaper in Humphrey and became its publisher in 2012.

Three years later, he was approached by area residents, encouraging him to consider purchasing the nearby Newman Grove Reporter.

The excitement of owning and operating two publications eventually became more of a challenge in terms of being able to hire newsroom talent — an issue affecting many newspa-

pers across the country.

Murphy said he enjoyed serving as publisher in Newman Grove, but it ultimately became too much to balance two news companies.

"You have to find the right person to operate newspapers, especially weekly newspapers. It's not easy to do that," he said. "With me having to go back and forth to do both jobs was way too much for me."

Murphy said he hates to see any community without its own newspaper.

"It'd be best if every community had their own newspaper ... I think as long as people support newspapers, there will be a place for them," he said.

# Help

Continued from Page 1—

sought to circle the wagons as they welcomed GOP state central committee members and notable guests for a booster event before their meeting on Saturday. The committee sets policy and governs most operations for the party in the state.

The keynote speaker for the event was GOP national strategist and former senior adviser to President Donald Trump, Kellyanne Conway, who sat down with the Daily News. On Friday, Conway's message to GOP leaders was crystal clear: It's time for the party to come together, and the importance of that unification cannot be overstated as the country heads into a critical 2024 election cycle.

"The overarching theme should be unity. The Democrats love to pretend that they're unified, that they have unity. They have unanimity," she said.

Conway explained that unanimity among Democrats is indicative of not having independent thought, but rather the willingness to support issues based on party affiliation.

"They're all for abortion anyone, anytime, anywhere, anyhow. They want to grab your guns. They want to tell your kids what's best for them in schools. That's not unity," Conway said. "Unity means that we as a party, here in Nebraska and elsewhere, have certain principles that bind us, and that we want certain issues and individuals who represent those issues to prevail and others to fail, but within the party we actively de-

bate the issues and have robust policy conversations."

Conway said coming together as a party is critical for passing laws that can have a meaningful, positive effect on people's lives, and she emphasized that despite differences within the state GOP, Nebraska has been a great example of this.

"I'm very happy to see under the new leadership of the NE GOP ... and with the state Legislature that you had all 32 Republicans sticking together ... it's really important to have those numbers."

By maintaining a focus on what unifies GOP members, not what divides them, the results will become self-evident. Conway pointed to concealed carry legislation, the recent school choice package and restrictions on abortion after 12 weeks as accomplishments in the state.

U.S. Rep. Mike Flood also attended the Friday event and echoed Conway's perspective.

"At the end of the day, the Republican Party has always had a big tent. The reason we've been successful in so many elections in Nebraska is that we recognize that there are differences in our party, but we all rally around conservative values."

Flood also discussed the importance of hosting such an event in Norfolk, as it remains a strong pocket for GOP support.

"It's great to have Republicans gather in Norfolk. We've had a long and proud history of electing Republicans," Flood said. "There is a really strong party here, a strong county

party, one that I've been a part of since I was a teenager. It's great to see the state see the value in that."

State Sen. Robert Dover, who attended a county GOP luncheon in Norfolk this week and attended the Friday night event, said communication between traditional and more progressive factions within the Republican Party is critical.

"I am concerned," Dover said. "I believe the two sides need to talk, because what could happen is that they could run candidates against each other, and we could lose good conservative votes."

Dover said conservative voters in Nebraska share the same core values.

"We all want the same things. We all want the best schools for our kids. We all want same-sex sports for our kids. We all want conservative initiatives passed," Dover said. "The past is the past. We all need to come together and do our job."

Dover was appointed to his post by former Gov. Pete Ricketts last year and plans to run to remain in his legislative seat in November 2024. Dover said he expects to make the official announcement about his election campaign in the coming weeks.

Dover and his team are working on several important bills for the next legislative session, including a bill on term limits for Unicameral members.

Speaking of the 2024 election season, Conway said there is much to be proud of within the Republican Party and that her

role is to help the party to continue to move in the right direction.

"Let me say this, I love our democracy. I love our constitutional republic," Conway said. "I love the fact that the Republican Party is truly the party of choice and free markets and competition. Competition is what made this country great."

"I am here to help. I'm here to help the party, and I'm here to help the conservative movement. I am literally here in Norfolk and in Nebraska at the invitation of Charles W. Herbst, because I believe in the party's principles and values. A party like ours is going to experience growing pains, and that's a good thing."

Herbst is a Nebraska agribusiness executive, politician and state GOP operative.

She added that Republicans need to be open-minded about changes in the way people vote and to embrace those changes.

"I'm a traditionalist. I like to show up at the polls on Election Day and cast my vote ... but if the new normal is voting early by mail-in ballots, showing up at the polls on the weekend three weeks before Election Day, we need to comply with those rules or we are going to get beat. We simply cannot make up the early vote deficit on Election Day and expect to prevail."

Conway said that while there are offers to join current campaigns, she is on contract as a contributor for Fox News and will be covering the first presidential debates next week.

# Unity

Continued from Page 1—

was a doer, she was a driver," Herbst said. And after a welcoming standing ovation, she said it was a relief to be in Norfolk.

"I have four teenagers, so coming to work and coming to Norfolk is a spa day," Conway said.

While a considerable bit of her talk critiqued prominent Democratic Party officials for policy-making decisions, she urged those in attendance to focus on what joins them together with their neighbors, as opposed to what polarizes them.

"Unity never, ever means you giving up your principles and your ideas. Unity means bringing those principles and those ideas to more people who are thirsting for it," she said.

In a similar vein, she encouraged listeners to

intuitively seek why they are Republicans and to take pride in that answer.

In addition to her attempts to build the spirit of those who dined within the four yellow-hued walls of the conference room, she also nudged the conservatives to appeal to Independents ahead of 2024.

"And the brightest line of distinction I see right now is among Independents. Those independents call themselves independents, but they really do ... align with us on policy. And they're there for the grabbing. ... That's what I'm concerned about: We need to make sure enough Independents know that we're a comfortable home for them," Conway said.

Margo Chenoweth of Norfolk, the vice chair-

person of the Stanton County Republicans, agreed with Conway's assertion on Independent voters and said the same could be extended to Libertarians.

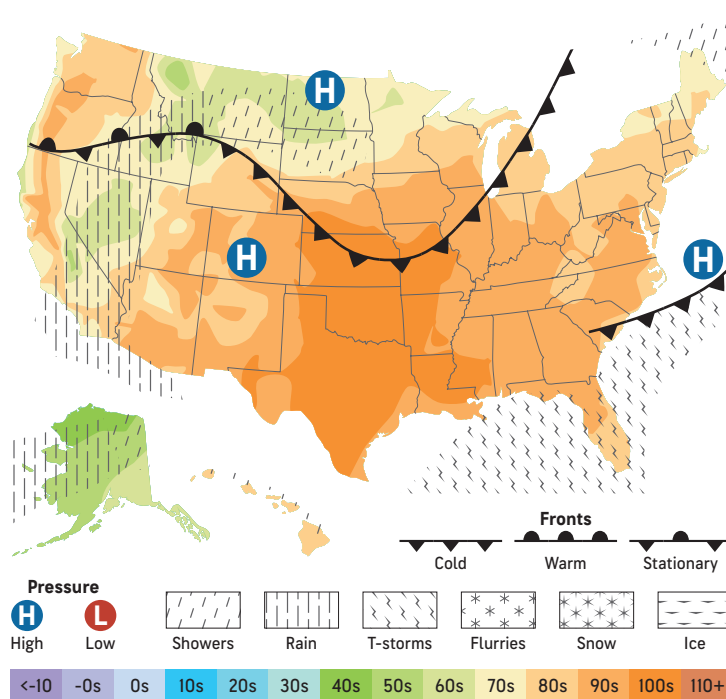
"Knocking on doors wins wars. You gotta go out (and) talk to them," Chenoweth said.

Conway communicated a handful of anecdotes from her time as the senior counselor to former U.S. President Donald Trump and thanked him for ways he rocked the Republican Party for the better.

"The other thing he did, that simple politicians cannot do ... is to take these issues that are mired in single digits in the polls and elevate them," she said, explaining how Trump chose the issues of immigration and trade.

# WEATHER

## NATIONAL OUTLOOK — SUNDAY



## SATURDAY

Across the nation

|                | Hi  | Lo | Prc  |
|----------------|-----|----|------|
| Albuquerque    | 95  | 70 | 0%   |
| Anchorage      | 61  | 51 | 30%  |
| Atlanta        | 89  | 67 | 0%   |
| Baltimore      | 85  | 60 | 1%   |
| Billings       | 78  | 58 | 88%  |
| Boston         | 75  | 61 | 30%  |
| Cheyenne       | 85  | 59 | 65%  |
| Chicago        | 85  | 70 | 10%  |
| Cleveland      | 78  | 67 | 0%   |
| Dallas         | 108 | 83 | 5%   |
| Denver         | 95  | 64 | 33%  |
| Des Moines     | 95  | 75 | 17%  |
| Detroit        | 80  | 64 | 0%   |
| Duluth         | 89  | 64 | 11%  |
| Honolulu       | 86  | 74 | 63%  |
| Houston        | 104 | 80 | 8%   |
| Indianapolis   | 84  | 64 | 1%   |
| Kansas City    | 104 | 78 | 10%  |
| Las Vegas      | 87  | 73 | 100% |
| Los Angeles    | 83  | 71 | 48%  |
| Miami Beach    | 86  | 79 | 100% |
| Milwaukee      | 84  | 71 | 17%  |
| Mpls-St Paul   | 94  | 70 | 11%  |
| Nashville      | 90  | 63 | 0%   |
| New Orleans    | 99  | 86 | 10%  |
| New York City  | 80  | 65 | 3%   |
| Oklahoma City  | 108 | 77 | 3%   |
| Orlando        | 92  | 77 | 88%  |
| Philadelphia   | 82  | 61 | 1%   |
| Phoenix        | 99  | 81 | 92%  |
| St Louis       | 90  | 69 | 4%   |
| Salt Lake City | 87  | 69 | 58%  |
| San Antonio    | 105 | 76 | 2%   |
| San Diego      | 74  | 69 | 93%  |
| San Francisco  | 70  | 60 | 12%  |
| Seattle        | 80  | 59 | 4%   |
| Sioux Falls    | 98  | 68 | 10%  |
| Washington     | 84  | 58 | 1%   |
| Wichita        | 109 | 71 | 2%   |

## FRIDAY

Across the state

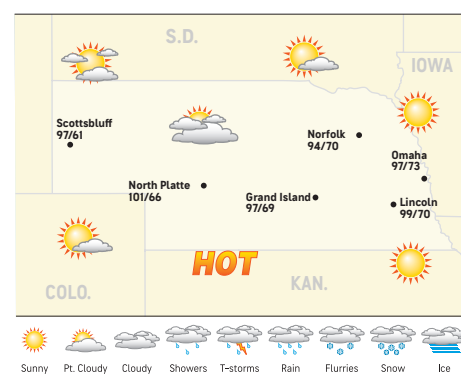
|              | Hi  | Lo | Prc |
|--------------|-----|----|-----|
| Ainsworth    | 96  | 75 |     |
| Albion       | 84  | 67 |     |
| Broken Bow   | 93  | 68 |     |
| Chadron      | 103 | 72 |     |
| Columbus     | 86  | 70 |     |
| Falls City   | 82  | 65 |     |
| Grand Island | 92  | 74 |     |
| Hastings     | 91  | 72 |     |
| Imperial     | 102 | 72 |     |
| Kearney      | 89  | 69 |     |
| Lincoln      | 87  | 68 |     |
| McCook       | 96  | 70 |     |
| Norfolk      | 86  | 71 |     |
| North Platte | 96  | 67 |     |
| Omaha        | 83  | 68 |     |
| O'Neill      | 88  | 71 |     |
| Scottsbluff  | 102 | 64 |     |
| Valentine    | 100 | 72 |     |
| Valley       | 81  | 69 |     |
| Wayne        | 82  | 64 |     |

## SUMMARY

Expect areas of smoke and northeast winds gusting up to 20 mph on Sunday as sunshine pushes highs into the lower 90s. A few clouds will roll through overnight as the low dips to 70.

After that, a three-day stretch of highs over 100 will linger in the Norfolk area. Winds will come from the south/southwest and gust up to 25 mph. Lows will dip into the mid-70s overnight.

## NEBRASKA — SUNDAY



Sunshine on Sunday will accompany highs in the 90s as areas of smoke cover eastern portions of the state. Lows will dip into the upper 60s and lower 70s before Monday's sunshine pushes highs to the upper 90s and around 100. In the west, expect sunshine with highs reaching the mid- to upper 90s on Sunday and near 100 on Monday.

Lows will dip mostly into the 60s.

## ALMANAC

**Norfolk** — High Friday, 86; low Saturday morning, 71. Record high temperature for Aug. 18, 104 set in 1983; record low, 47 set in 1943 and 2002. Normal high, 84; normal low, 61.

**Precipitation** — Friday, 0; month, 2.64; departure, .51; since Jan. 1, 16.30 departure, -2.76.

**State/nation** — State high Friday, 103 at Alliance and Chadron; state low Saturday morning, 61 at Ogallala. Nation's high Friday, 115 at Death Valley and Stovepipe Wells, California; nation's low Saturday morning, 32 near Davis, West Virginia.

**Other data** — Sunrise Sunday, 6:43 a.m.; sunset Sunday, 8:23 p.m.

| NORFOLK                   |                                | NEBRASKA                  |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Friday's high temperature | Sat. morning's low temperature | Friday's high temperature | Sat. morning's low temperature |
| <b>86</b>                 | <b>71</b>                      | <b>103</b>                | <b>61</b>                      |
| Record: 104 in 1983       | Record: 47 in 1943, 2002       | Alliance, Chadron         | Ogallala                       |

### FLOOR MAINTENANCE

PAPER SUPPLY

910 Queen City Blvd.  
Norfolk, NE 68701  
402-371-4140

e: [Floormps@floormps.com](mailto:Floormps@floormps.com)  
w: [Floormps.com](http://Floormps.com)

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 9 |   | 4 | 1 |
| 4 |   | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| 3 | 8 |   | 2 | 5 |
| 2 |   | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| 3 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 |   |   | 4 | 8 |
|   | 9 | 3 |   |   |
|   | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 |

Difficulty: ★★★★★ 8/19

In polls during the 2016 election cycle, 2% of Americans ranked immigration as a top issue, according to Conway, while trade wasn't ranked among the top issues.

Other anecdotes regarding Trump weren't as serious: "I told him you need to eat like you need to tweet: It's all about healthy choices."

"I really liked what she had to say. I can't think of anything I disagreed with. ... I think our party has come a long way since we've turned this around, and we've got a long way to go," Chenoweth said. "I was really happy they decided to do this (event) in Norfolk."

"You're the best ambassadors we have, I promise you," Conway said at the end of her highly anticipated appearance.