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My mornings start ritualistically with a cup of coffee and the news. I take the former black and the latter any way: paper, podcast, or TV. I shell out a few dollars for what I see as a critical part of any American's daily routine because, in my eyes, accessing a wealth of excellent reporting is worth giving up a few Starbucks coffees every month. It's an opinion that makes me an outlier among the U.S. population, as most of my friends would prefer to stay in the dark instead of bypassing a pay wall. Even as I routinely pore over the front page of my local paper (or, at least, the digital version I get in my email inbox), newspapers across the country are struggling to stay afloat. Despite this struggle, the free press remains as critical to democracy as it has ever been.

In a recent internship interview, I was asked to summarize the word "journalism" in a sentence. Nervous and sweaty, I babbled out a convoluted answer about promoting citizen development and engaging the community. My answer wasn't wrong, and I got the job, but my interviewer – now soon-to-be internship supervisor – later pointed out that the answer to the question is simple: journalism

is truth-telling. Liberal democracy surmises — but doesn't promise — that the truth shall always win out. The First Amendment exists, then, to ensure our government and institutions fulfill this basic responsibility of honesty. Without dedicated journalists, the electorate would remain blind to corruption that government so desperately seeks to conceal. Far from being the enemy of the people, the press seeks to hold seemingly omnipotent institutions answerable to the American people.

Yet, we sit today in a period of uncertainty for the future of the American press. Although the “Trump Bump” has ushered in a new golden age of journalism, trust in the media is rapidly disintegrating. The government's cooptation of “fake news” to attack any critical coverage seeks to delegitimize the institutions holding it accountable. Eroding public trust in the press is all too plain: when the public distrusts the sources exposing government corruption, the White House can effectively dominate discourse on its activities. Top-down attacks on the press have undoubtedly hurt public approval of the mainstream media, but they have yet to weaken the press's dedication to watchdog reporting. Journalists have not backed down in the face of relentless undermining of the media, and, if anything, the incumbent administration has reenergized accountability journalism. It seems every day, groundbreaking headlines plaster the front pages of the New York

Times or the Washington Post. The press refuses to let political officials get away with toxic lies, bullying, and corruption as they inform the American public of government activity that would otherwise go unnoticed. The scandal-ridden Trump administration has reasserted the press's role as the Fourth Estate — to fully secure that position necessitates public confidence.