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**POST-GAZETTE NEWSROOM PAYS FOR FULL-PAGE AD IN THE
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE TO PROMOTE ITS COMMITMENT TO
INDEPENDENT, QUALITY JOURNALISM**

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette newsroom employees today took out a paid, full-page PG advertisement in which they expressed to readers their continued commitment to independent journalism vital to the community and democracy itself. “We Are the Post-Gazette” a headline proclaims under a photograph of the newsroom staff. “We are independent, impartial journalists who work without interference or influence to provide OUR community with news that matters,” part of the ad copy reads.

The extraordinary advertisement is running in the wake of the controversial firing Thursday of veteran, award-winning Post-Gazette editorial cartoonist Rob Rogers. Rogers said he was fired for drawing cartoons satirizing President Donald Trump, among whose supporters are PG Publisher John Robinson Block and new Editorial Director Keith Burris. The firing was roundly criticized nationally and locally, including by the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh, which represents 150 reporters, photographers, artists, page designers, web editors, copy editors and others at the PG. Rogers was not a member of the union. Upon his termination, his shocked unionized co-workers issued a statement lauding his work and decrying the political nature of his firing. “It appears Rob’s only transgression was doing his job—providing satirical comment based on his political views of the world...We mourn the fact that the PG editorial pages apparently are no longer the free marketplace of ideas,” the Guild statement said.

Rogers’ firing has created a firestorm of criticism by readers, many of whom have canceled their subscriptions and have urged others to do so. Readers’ ire also has even been heaped upon newsroom employees because the public does not understand that the staffs of the newsroom and the editorial pages department are separate and do not work with each other.

Appearing on Page A3 in today’s editions, the ad was an attempt by the Newspaper Guild to reassure readers that newsroom employees will continue to cover the news in a fair, balanced, accurate manner despite controversial editorial positions and actions by Block and Burris. On A2, the facing page, newsrooms managers ran a paid half-page ad reaffirming their support of a free, independent newsroom that is unconnected to the editorial pages department, the same position espoused by those they supervise. (See attached for both ads).

Reporters Paula Reed Ward and Kate Giammarise came up with the idea for the newsroom ad, which was written, photographed and designed by Guild members, and paid for by the union.

"We appreciate our loyal readers' frustrations over recent changes on the PG's editorial page. In fact, we share them," said Ward, who covers courts. "But by canceling subscriptions -- or simply not reading -- our community members are losing out on quality, independent journalism that is absolutely essential in today's era of attacks on the First Amendment."

"We wanted to remind people that the PG is more than just the editorial page," said Giammarise, who covers poverty and social services. "There are committed journalists here working hard every day to uncover stories about our community. Canceling your subscription only hurts our ability as journalists to bring you the news."

Michael A. Fuoco, Guild president and a PG enterprise reporter, said Guild members want the public to continue to view them as their advocates for seeking truth in issues affecting the community. Newsroom staffers refuse to be intimidated by the actions of Block and Burris and will continue to perform their duties without bias, he said.

"Journalism is our calling. Our mission remains to accurately and fairly report the news our valued readers need without fear of external or internal forces," Fuoco said. "We believe in journalism and the public's right to know the truth."

"Our mission is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable, regardless of the political leanings of our publisher and editorial director. The public can trust us to continue to complete that mission daily."