

# Local news isn't just dying, maybe something worse is happening

The Bethlehem Gadfly [Uncategorized](#) October 31, 2020

## **“A Partisan Future for Local News”**

ref: **“How the decline of local news affects communities?”**

Here's a frightening story.

A week or two ago (see link above) Gadfly wrote about the closing of the *Morning Call* newsroom and the consequent importance of local newspapers like the *Bethlehem Press*, as well as blogs like Gadfly and other citizen journalism efforts.

Since 2001, 2000 mostly local newspapers have folded.

But somebody will always find a way to make a buck out of somebody else's trouble.

As local news collapses, a secretive network has risen to take its place.

This *New York Times* podcast **“A Partisan Future for Local News”** focused on an entrepreneur named Brian Timpone.

First, Timpone found a way to market his ability to supply local news to major legacy operations like the *Chicago Tribune* that were cutting costs. For instance, the *Tribune* fired its community news staff, and Timpone filled the void by free-lance writers, even from the Philippines, writing under false bylines. The “meat and potatoes” local news of school board meetings, police reports, high school graduations, and etc. was not written locally but supplied by Timpone's network of writers.

Outsourcing local news. Crazy.

This effort failed when his clients learned how he was doing it.

So, second phase.

Timpone bought up local news outlets and started supplying what looked like local news but was actually content ordered by his clients, often politicians or political campaigns (e.g., Senator Collins and Graham).

The clients would tell what to write, who to interview, what slant to take, etc., etc.

Such as the (Michigan) **Thumb Reporter** and the **Maine Business Daily**:

**Thumb Reporter**  
Friday, October 30, 2020

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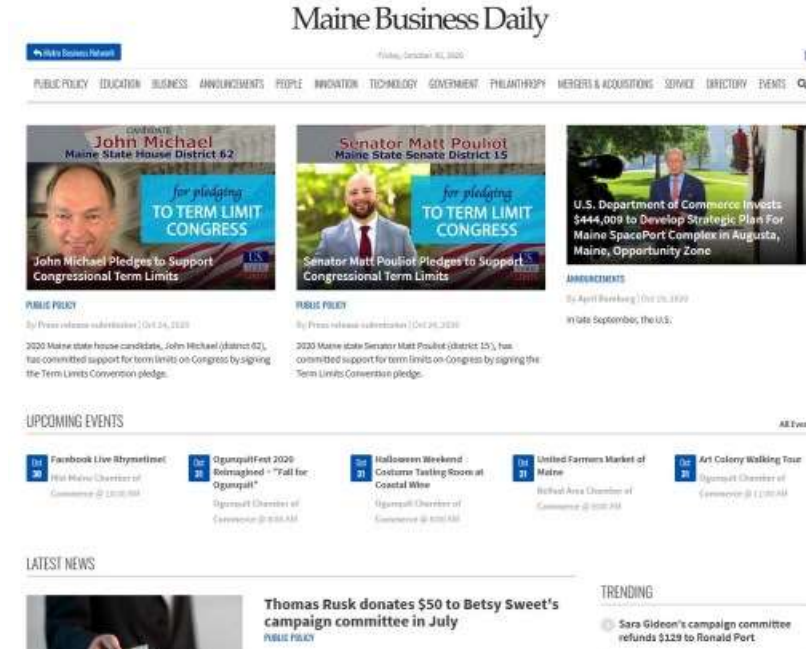
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They look legit, but clients are ordering the stories.

The partisanship of the national news is now being injected into local news.

This is coming from both sides but mainly from the right.

A modicum of straight news gives the look of legitimacy and the look of neutrality.

But these are actually propaganda networks.

The ordered stories are not labeled or disclosed as such, and much of this while not illegal is certainly unethical.

Timpone has 1300 clients in the 50 states now, and he plans 15,000.

Dear god.

Somebody pinch me to wake up.

*Tip o' the hat to Barb for calling this to Gadfly's attention.*

**The Bethlehem Gadfly**