

Bill addresses Facebook, Google 'duopoly' over online ad revenue

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The news industry, which has been pushing for the right to bargain collectively against tech giants that are eating up ad revenue, is cheering a new bill introduced this week.

The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, introduced by Rep. David Cicilline, D-Rhode Island, would allow [media](#) outlets to come together to negotiate terms with Facebook, Google and other [tech companies](#).

"Our democracy is strongest when we have a free, open press that informs citizens, holds [public officials](#) accountable, and roots out corruption," said Cicilline, who is on the House Judiciary Antitrust Subcommittee.

Facebook and Google—which the News Media Alliance is calling "the Duopoly"—together account for about 70 percent of online [ad revenue](#), according to different tracking firms. The News Media Alliance, which represents about 2,000 newspapers in the United States and Canada, including this one, puts that number at 73 percent.

"We are grateful to Congressman Cicilline for his commitment to ensuring fair competition with the platforms and for his work to preserve quality journalism," News Media Alliance President and CEO David Chavern said in a statement Wednesday. "Our industry depends on our ability to continue to invest in stories that report the truth and hold our public officials accountable."

Citing the power of Facebook and Google to affect online traffic to [news](#) sites, the bill would provide a 48-month safe harbor from antitrust laws so publications can collectively negotiate with online platforms. Some news executives have said it is hard for individual publications to even get an appointment to talk with the big tech companies.

The bill also has the support of most other news industry associations, and more than 200,000 local and national news publications, according to Ciciline's press release.

Ciciline's fact sheet says "The bill only allows the press to band together to negotiate with platforms on conditions so long as it directly relates to the quality, accuracy, attribution or branding, and interoperability of news." It notes that publishers would not collude on price.

Facebook and Google have not responded to our request for comment.

The introduction of the bill comes as some big publishers have become more vocal about the power of the tech giants. News Corp. CEO Robert Thomson recently called on Facebook and Google to pay for news content, echoing the sentiments of founder Rupert Murdoch. Their calls for carriage fees, like those paid by cable companies to media companies, have raised the eyebrows of some public advocacy groups.

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