

Senate Resolution No. 1322

BY: Senator HOYLMAN

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 3, 2019, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day

WHEREAS, The First Amendment of our U.S. Constitution enshrines for journalists and media organizations their constitutionally protected rights to free speech and to a free press; and

WHEREAS, The theme for World Press Freedom Day, May 3, 2019, is "Media for Democracy: Journalism and Democracy in Times of Disinformation"; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson, recognizing the importance of the press to democracy, wisely declared "If I had to choose between government without newspapers, and newspapers without government, I wouldn't hesitate to choose the latter"; and

WHEREAS, The 2018 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders warned that "Hostility towards the media, openly encouraged by political leaders, and the efforts of authoritarian regimes to export their vision of journalism pose a threat to democracies."; and

WHEREAS, Freedom House noted in the report **Freedom in the World 2019** that the United States does not place among the top 30 countries ranked for press freedom; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. was among the top 5 deadliest countries for journalists in 2018, behind Afghanistan, Syria, Mexico and Yemen, in which we have faced 35 reported incidents in which a total of 42 members of the press were physically attacked; and

WHEREAS, In the last decade and a half, the number of reporters, editors, photographers and other newsroom employees in the newspaper industry fell by 45 percent, contributing to nearly 1,500 "ghost papers" with skeleton staffs offering little to no local news coverage; and

WHEREAS, During such time period, more than 1,400 communities across the country lost a newspaper; and

WHEREAS, Direct threats to journalists and members of the media are on the rise in the United States, including the shooting in Pennsylvania at **The Capital Gazette**, physical attacks against reporters covering political rallies and various forms of online harassment of journalists (especially people of color, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community); and

WHEREAS, Fact-based news reporting elevates the importance of freedom of expression in this country and a free press highlights our

humanity through storytelling, creating space for dialogue, thought exchange, and political engagement with a more transparent government; and

WHEREAS, Freedom of the press is a key component of democratic governance and activism in civil society, which helps promote a more transparent government that citizens and residents may engage with; and

WHEREAS, Journalists and media workers in New York State and across the country play an essential role in promoting government accountability, defending democratic activity, combating fraudulent news, and strengthening civil society, despite threats to their safety; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend journalists and media workers for their efforts to hold the powerful accountable and to seek truth, pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives carrying out their work, condemn actions to suppress freedom of the press, and elevate the positive impact that local journalism has on communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 3, 2019, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.