

Newspapers will never die **by Congressman Jack Kingston**

I cannot think of a time in my life when newspapers were not present. From my father reading one at the breakfast table or mom referring to an article she read to debates with my sisters over which comic strip was best, they have always been a staple in the Kingston household.

As Athenians we subscribed to the *Athens Daily News* and the *Athens Banner Herald*. My parents also liked to read the Atlanta papers and columns of Furman Bisher and Lewis Grizzard. As teenagers we read *The Athens Observer*.

When I went to work as a shipping agent in Savannah, I would pick up newspapers to read the tide charts and ship arrivals. Libby and I found our first home in the wanted ads of the *Savannah Morning News*.

In public service, newspapers have become an even larger part of my life. They are a tool to communicate with the people, to get feedback on a recent vote, or pick up an example of government waste to be used in a speech or committee hearing. Newspapers literally transmit the voice of the people to the halls of government.

There is something special about sitting down with a newspaper and feeling the crinkle of the paper between your fingers. As you thumb through the pages, you get more than just newsprint on your hands. You get a sense for what is happening in your community.

When something appears in the newspaper, it is real and it is permanent. Just ask anyone who has had an unflattering photo show up in the town crier.

Each time they are printed, newspapers serve as a record of what we have and have not accomplished in the intervening days since their last issue. They bring us word of what our community has created from school achievements and church happenings to births, birthdays, and the founding of new businesses. They also bring us word of what we have lost like deaths or institutions closed.

While we might miss the notion reading them in real time, I have found some of the most interesting books are compilations of newspaper articles which provide an account of history as it was lived.

Today I read articles from over a dozen newspapers, some hard copy and some digital. I am better informed as a citizen and a legislator as a result.

In today's world, newspapers offer us a break from the hyper-critical and anonymous world created by the Internet. They give us a chance to stop looking inward and start looking outward. In them we can engage with those people who share in our society in an open and honest setting.

At their best, newspapers serve as a “mirror of the world” covering the big issues that impact our everyday lives, the goings on of our neighborhoods, and our favorite sports teams from little league fields all the way to the World Series.

While the form or method of delivery may change, that is why newspapers will always be an indispensable part of our lives.

Congressman Jack Kingston represents the First District of Georgia in the United States House of Representatives.