



By: TA | AP Insight

# Layoffs at The Washington Post – a heavy blow to a legendary news brand



The Washington Post laid off one-third of its staff Wednesday, eliminating its sports section, several foreign bureaus and its books coverage in a widespread purge that represented a brutal blow to journalism and one of its most legendary brands.

The Post's executive editor, Matt Murray, called the move painful but necessary to put the outlet on stronger footing and weather changes in technology and user habits. "We can't be everything to everyone," Murray said in a note to staff members.

He outlined the changes in a companywide online meeting, and staff members then began getting emails with one of two subject lines — telling them their role was or was not eliminated.

Rumors of layoffs had circulated for weeks, ever since word leaked that sports reporters who had expected to travel to Italy for the Winter Olympics would not be going.

But when official word came down, the size and scale of the cuts were shocking, affecting virtually every department in the newsroom.

"It's just devastating news for anyone who cares about journalism in America and, in fact, the world," said Margaret Sullivan, a Columbia University journalism professor and former media columnist at the Post and The New York Times. "The Washington Post has been so important in so many ways, in news coverage, sports and cultural coverage."

Martin Baron, the Post's first editor under its current owner, billionaire **Jeff Bezos**, condemned his former boss and called what has happened at the newspaper "a case study in near-instant, self-inflicted brand destruction."

As of midday, the Post did not have any news of the changes on its website.

## Journalists pleaded with Bezos for help

Bezos, who has been silent in recent weeks amid pleas from Post journalists to step in and prevent the cutbacks, had no immediate comment Wednesday.

The newspaper has been bleeding subscribers in part due to decisions made by Bezos, including pulling back from an **endorsement of Kamala Harris**, a Democrat, during the 2024 presidential election against Donald Trump, a Republican, and directing a **more conservative turn** on liberal **opinion pages**.

A private company, the Post does not reveal how many subscribers it has, but it is believed to be roughly 2 million.

The Post would also not say how many people it has on staff, making it impossible to estimate how many people were laid off Wednesday. The Post also did not outline its finances.

The Post's troubles stand in contrast to its longtime competitor The New York Times, which has been thriving in recent years, in large part due to investments in ancillary products such as games and its Wirecutter product recommendations.

The Times has **doubled** its staff over the past decade.



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Eliminating the sports section puts an end to a department that has hosted many well-known bylines through the years, among them John Feinstein, Michael Wilbon, Shirley Povich, Sally

Jenkins and Tony Kornheiser.

The Times has also largely ended its sports section, but it has replaced the coverage by buying The Athletic and incorporating its work into the Times website.

The Post's Book World, a destination for book reviews, literary news and author interviews, has been a dedicated section in its Sunday paper.

A half-century ago, the Post's coverage of Watergate, led by intrepid reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, entered the history books.

The Style section under longtime Executive Editor Ben Bradlee hosted some of the country's best feature writing.

## All Mideast correspondents and editors laid off

Word of specific cuts drifted out during the day, as when Cairo Bureau Chief Claire Parker announced on X that she had been laid off, along with all of the newspaper's Middle East correspondents and editors. "Hard to understand the logic," she wrote.

In the immediate future, Murray said, the Post would concentrate on areas that demonstrate authority, distinctiveness and impact, and resonate with readers, including politics, national affairs and security.

Even during its recent troubles, the Post has been notably **aggressive** in coverage of Trump's changes to the federal workforce.

The company's structure is rooted in a different era, when the Post was a dominant print product, Murray said in his note to staff members. In areas such as video, the outlet hasn't kept up with consumer habits, he said.

**Our daily story output has substantially fallen in the last five years - Matt Murray**

"Significantly, our daily story output has substantially fallen in the last five years," he said. "And even as we produce much excellent work, we too often write from one perspective, for one slice of the audience."

While there are business areas that need to be addressed, Baron pointed a finger of blame at Bezos — for a "gutless" order to kill a presidential endorsement and for remaking an editorial page that stands out only for "moral infirmity" and "sickening" efforts to curry favor with Trump.

"Loyal readers, livid as they saw owner Jeff Bezos betraying the values he was supposed to uphold, fled The Post," Baron wrote. "In truth, they were driven away, by the hundreds of thousands."

Baron said he was grateful for Bezos' support when he was editor, noting that the Amazon founder came under brutal pressure from Trump during the president's first term.

"He spoke forcefully and eloquently of a free press and The Post's mission, demonstrating his commitment in concrete terms," Baron wrote. "He often declared that The Post's success would be among the proudest achievements of his life. I wish I detected the same spirit today. There is no sign of it."