

# NEWS RELEASE

All News Editors and News Directors

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW REORGANIZES TO DEAL WITH CHANGING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMIC DOWNTOWN**

***Steven A. Smith Resigns Editorship; Successor Not Yet Named  
Reduced workforce looms; core coverage to be preserved***

SPOKANE—In the wake of announcements by other daily newspapers around the nation, managers of *The Spokesman-Review* today announced plans to reduce its workforce, adopt a new format and reconfigure distribution operations in parts of the newspaper's circulation area. Publisher W. Stacey Cowles said the changes announced Wednesday are part of the newspaper's efforts to deal with a deteriorating national economy and rising newsprint and delivery costs.

Meanwhile *Spokesman-Review* Editor Steven A. Smith announced his resignation from the newspaper's top editorial position, effective October 3. Smith, a nationally recognized leader in emerging media technologies and journalism ethics, has headed the *Spokesman-Review* newsroom since July 2002. A successor has not yet been named.

Cowles noted that there is nothing unusual in workforce reductions and stressed that the newspaper "remains committed to being the Number 1 provider of news and advertising in the Inland Northwest for many years to come."

"Our goal remains that of being among the best daily newspapers of our size anywhere in America—and, most importantly, of being the preferred source of information in the Inland Northwest," Cowles said. "We are not, however, immune from general economic forces. Whether they are positive or negative, we have to recognize and react to them. We've had to do that often over the course of our 125 years in business—and now we are having to do it again."

Cowles said the newspaper's 2009 workforce will be about 470, down about 60 from approved 2008 staffing levels. Many of the jobs have been and will be eliminated through voluntary resignations and retirements during 2008; the rest will require employees to be laid off, he said. Persons laid off as part of the reduction of force will be eligible for the company's standard severance package, which offers up to 38 weeks' pay depending on length of service. Staffing will be reduced in all major departments of the newspaper, not just the newsroom.

Smith said, "my resignation as editor of *The Spokesman-Review* should not overshadow the simultaneous layoff of more than 25 newsroom staffers. Those journalists losing their

jobs are among the newspaper's best and brightest. I hired most of them. I pledge to do everything possible to help them find new opportunities in the profession we love.”

“I have been honored to serve as editor of this wonderful newspaper for more than six years,” Smith said. “My thanks to Publisher Stacey Cowles and the SR executive management team for giving me this opportunity.”

Smith said, “with great sadness, I leave behind the finest group of journalists with which I’ve ever been associated. And I have no doubt they will continue to work on behalf of this community, telling people what they know when they know it, shining light in dark corners and pursuing the truth where there is truth to be discerned. Journalism is a calling, a call to service. *Spokesman-Review* journalists honor that call every day. I know they will continue to produce a newspaper to make the Inland Northwest proud.”

### **NEW FORMAT, OTHER CHANGES COMING**

Cowles also announced that the newspaper will adopt a new, more compact format in June 2009, conforming to what is becoming a new industry standard for page size. The new page will be the same length as the current page, but will be only about 12 inches wide. The current page is about 13 inches wide. Papers in Portland, Seattle and elsewhere in the Northwest have previously announced plans to make similar format changes by the end of 2009.

“While the page will be slightly smaller in size, we anticipate little reduction in the amount of news in the paper,” according to Shaun O’L. Higgins, *The Spokesman-Review’s* Director of Sales & Marketing. “We will actually gain some space as we look at reconfiguring the way we handle advertising. The traditional layout methods for ads will be replaced in a June with a contemporary, modular approach that should offer advertisers—particularly classified advertisers—greater impact, while freeing up space that currently goes to “filler” ads for use by the news department.”

“Readers who feel our classified-advertising type is too small, are going to be very happy when they see the new design in June,” Higgins said.

Managing Editor Gary Graham, who will head the newsroom during the search for Smith’s successor, expressed disappointment over the reduction of news staff. The changes announced today represent the second time in 12 months that the newsroom has been downsized. “These reductions make each of our jobs harder and it means, frankly, that we won’t be able to cover everything we have covered in the past,” Graham said. “We will, however, still have the largest newsgathering force in the region and still be able to cover the critical issues our readers expect us to cover. We’ll remain the only regional paper with state-capital correspondents in Olympia and Boise.”

Graham noted that the paper also would be maintaining its award-winning North Idaho operation, housed in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

Higgins noted that the newspaper will continue to publish its popular *Voice* sections for Post Falls/Rathdrum, the West Plains, Spokane Valley, North Spokane, South Spokane and, in North Idaho, the weekly *Handle Extra* section. “These sections enable us to cover and distribute highly localized news and advertising to our readers in those areas,” Higgins

said.

“The things we do best, we will continue to do, serving our readers interests to the best of our abilities and maintaining the highest standards of journalism practice in our industry,” Graham said.

Among other changes the newspaper has announced in recent months:

The paper’s primary website, **spokesmanreview.com** will be relaunched later this month as **spokesman.com** and will feature a new look and improved site navigation among other improvements. **Spokesmanreview.com** is the Inland Northwest’s most-popular regional website, with about 3.5 million page-views each month.

The paper has signed multiple agreements with Google, amazon.com, RealCities and other web giants to develop new capabilities in online delivery of its archives and marketing of its classified advertising products. The latter are now being co-marketed, in print and online, as **spokesmanautos.com**, **spokesmanhomes.com**, **spokesmanjobs.com** and **spokesmanclassifieds.com**. “Print remains the leader in classified advertising,” Higgins said, “but online options have been successful not only in grabbing share from existing media, but also in finding whole new categories of business to develop. We are committed to keep our fair share in this battle and feel that we are again holding our own.” The newspaper has recently developed and launched a number of specialized-content websites, including **awayfinderonline.com**, a regional travel site; **bizfinderNW.com**, an online business directory; **downtoearthNW.com**, an environmental site, and **spokane7.com**, an entertainment site. Specialized sports coverage is offered through **cougsmobile.com** and **zagsmobile.com**.

An agreement earlier this year with RadioSpokane (Mapleton Communications) enables *The Spokesman-Review* to broadcast radio news reports through the day at the bottom of each hour on KRJB-790 AM. The paper also produces “On the Record”, an hourly, Monday-Friday news-talk show, aired on KJRB and hosted by Rebecca Mack

Cowles noted that “the newspaper’s long-term plan is “to make sure we are applying the right amount of resources to serve our existing readers, adapt to changes in their media habits and, simultaneously, attract younger readers.”

“Our success in doing that won’t be measured in a month, or even year, but over time,” Cowles said.

## **SMITH’S RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT**

During his six years at *The Spokesman-Review*, Smith championed transparency and openness in newsroom transactions. Among other innovations he instituted daily webcasts of editorial planning meetings and online blogs on newspaper issues. He spearheaded “Our Kids, Our Business” all-media community project on behalf of children, as well as *VOX* a free-standing newspaper for youth distributed to area high school students. Under his

leadership the newspaper received awards for investigative reporting and ethics, including several related to investigations that led to the recall of former Spokane Mayor James West. This year he was awarded the David Soukup Award as Washington's Child Advocate of the Year and the Anna Quindlen Award for Excellence in Journalism in Behalf of Children.

Prior to joining *The Spokesman-Review*, Smith was editor for two years of the *Statesman Journal*, a Gannett newspaper in Salem, Oregon. Previously, he was editor and vice president of *The Gazette*, a Freedom Communications Inc. newspaper in Colorado Springs, Colo. He was named editor in October 1995 and vice president in 1997.

Before joining *The Gazette*, Smith served two years as assistant to the vice presidents/news for Knight-Ridder Inc. in Miami. He worked with Knight-Ridder's 30 newspapers, developing training programs, producing critiques and assisting with strategic planning. He specialized in issues involving newsroom change and civic journalism.

Previously, he was managing editor at *The Wichita Eagle* and held a variety of positions at the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*. Both are Knight-Ridder newspapers. He also worked at the *Star-Tribune* in Minneapolis and the *Register-Guard* in Eugene, Oregon.

A graduate of the University of Oregon and Ohio State University, Smith chaired the American Society of Newspaper Editors "Change" committee in 1997-98 and was a member of ASNE's Credibility Think Tank. He is active in the Society of Professional Journalists. He has been a frequent lecturer on civic journalism and newsroom change for the Pew Center on Civic Journalism, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the American Press Institute, and has lectured on newsroom training issues for the Freedom Forum. He serves on the advisory board for the Pew Center on the States and is a member of the University of Oregon Journalism Advancement Council. Recently he has addressed audiences or participated in professional exchanges with newspapers in Sweden, Norway and Ukraine.

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