



Koch brothers mull big US newspaper buy: report

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Billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch -- famous for bankrolling small-government causes -- are weighing a bid to buy several top US newspapers, the New York Times reported Sunday.

Koch Industries, a company owned by the brothers, is mulling the purchase of several regional newspapers owned by the struggling Tribune Company, including the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Baltimore Sun, the Orlando Sentinel and the Hartford Courant, according to the Times.

Koch Industries backs a number of libertarian causes, including policy groups like the Cato Institute think tank in Washington.

The Koch brothers also were behind the formation of the Americans for Prosperity political action group, which supports many causes backed by ultra-conservative Tea Party groups, although they are not formally affiliated.

If the sale goes through, it would be among the largest sales of newspapers by circulation in the country.

The Tribune Company -- a \$7 billion media conglomerate that also owns 23 television stations -- has struggled in recent years and is selling off its print properties after emerging from bankruptcy late last year.

The Los Angeles Times is the fourth-largest paper in the United States by circulation, while the Chicago Tribune is ninth. The deal could also include Hoy, the second-largest Spanish-language daily newspaper, The Times wrote.

The newspaper said that by early next month, the Tribune Company is expected to send financial data to "serious suitors" and that Koch Industries is among those interested. It said another possible purchaser is Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, but that the company is only interested in acquiring the Los Angeles Times.

Billionaire Democratic donors Eli Broad and Ronald Burkle were also said to have been interested in purchasing one or more of the dailies.

The Tribune Company reportedly is seeking to sell all eight papers and their operations as a bundle. It could decide to hold onto the dailies, however, if it fails to draw a sufficiently attractive offer.