

Submitter: Mike Francis  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB2605  
Gentlepersons:

I've been a newspaper and radio journalist in Oregon for almost 40 years, and have been alarmed and discouraged by the decline in newsroom employment and, consequently, coverage of important civic issues. That's why I hope you'll support HB 2605.

As you know, the bill would fund a journalism working group established by the University of Oregon's Agora Journalism Center and the Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism. The bill also will seek to fill news deserts i the state, and will focus on the health of non-traditional news outlets, such as ethnic and non-English outlets.

It's a disturbing thing to see public bodies operating increasingly in the dark, not necessarily because of any malign intent on their part, but because journalists are no longer in place, or are spread so thinly that the public's business is taking place without public notice.

Newspapers and other outlets are by no means perfect institutions, but they perform an essential service in a democracy, highlighting injustices, neglect and corruption.

If independent journalism declines to the point of irrelevance, other, untrustworthy sources of information will fill the void. Technology companies don't regard themselves as guardians of the public interest, but of their own. Political sheets don't seek to enlighten, but to popularize partisan views.

Please look with favor upon this modest initiative that would help ensure that the public's business continues to be done in the public eye, and to ensure the continued accountability of public officials that Oregon citizens deserve.

Thank you,

Mike Francis

Astoria, Ore.