

Submitter:                               Jeb Bladine  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee:                               House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure:                                   HB3392  
3/28/2023

HB 3392 is among a flurry of legislative bills seeking to eliminate “real public notice” about important government and private “takings,” among other communications.

As additional example, SB 862 seeks to eliminate newspaper notices for sale of confiscated goods in storage units. That is a small cost that generally is applied to the owners of those confiscated goods, and an important notice to communities about who might be experiencing the kind of financial difficulties that should be a warning to others.

HB 3392 seeks to eliminate newspaper notices about property confiscated by Oregon State Police and other law enforcement agencies. OSP sought similar action in 2012, then backed away from the bill after meetings with representative of ONPA.

These and other bills are part of a long-continuing effort by many interests to eliminate newspaper legal notices. If successful, those interests will do much to weaken and even eliminate independent community newspapers, where the public has looked for more than 100 years for important legal notices.

Many argue that putting those legal notices onto websites is just as good, or even better, in terms of public notice. If that were true, consider that all legal notices in ONPA member newspapers are collected onto a statewide website. But the fact is, few people know to look there; many people lack Internet access; and the third-party safeguards and permanency of newspaper publication is nowhere to be found when government simply places its own legal notices online.

Our McMinnville newspaper, like so many others, has two extremely important interests in the publication of legal notices: First, the revenue from providing that important service to government and to the community has become very important to newspaper business survival; even more important is that legal notices are the ORS-mandated communications that most closely follow the mission of independent journalism, providing a core element of the traditional community newspaper.

If you remove newspapers as the platform for communicating these mandated notices, you will take away much of the reason those newspaper have to provide the community news coverage their readers have come to expect. And we all will be poorer for it.

There are those, unfortunately, who simply would not mourn the passing of community newspapers. There are others who support community newspapers but don't recognize or act to prevent the financial and journalistic threat represented by the elimination of newspaper legal notices.

From our long-time newspaper family, we hope you are among those who will help slow and even eliminate the movement to reduce public transparency and weaken community newspapers.

Regards,

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