

MALHEUR ENTERPRISE

The Voice of Malheur County

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY – IN SUPPORT House Bill 2605

Every session, the Joint Ways and Means Committee makes spending decisions for a primary goal: to strengthen this state and its people.

You fund sewer and water projects to make cities and towns better.

You fund local schools to strengthen education.

You fund highway and road projects to strengthen transit and commerce.

And you fund economic development to strengthen everything from food processors to semiconductor manufacturers.

With House Bill 2605, you have the opportunity to strengthen Oregon's access to community information.

This legislation is not a handout to the Oregon press. This funding isn't going to make any corporate hedge fund even fatter.

With this legislation, you give those of us who love Oregon, who care for its people and who care for the truth the tools to survive.

This gives us the tools to improve our profession.

If the news profession continues to wither, it is not owners and reporters who suffer.

It is communities – your communities – who are left to act with little or no independent information.

Just recently, in Malheur County, we had the entire school boards in four communities resign. You would not read a word about it on any district website or facebook page. You would find out only because the Malheur Enterprise reported what happened and why.

I have been in this profession for 50 years and I have seen many changes. But we still need to change as journalists. We need to do better, to be more careful, more fair and more committed to integrity

To do better, we need help and House Bill 2605 seeds that help. This bill prods research so all newsrooms can sharpen skills. It fosters collaboration among news organizations to more effectively work together for Oregon. And it demands accountability – to you – on how this money is spent.

The price tag of \$2.9 million is a modest cost to preserve a vital infrastructure serving Oregonians from Vale to Yachats, from Hood River to Klamath Falls.

Please, approve this legislation.

Respectfully,

Les Zaitz

Editor and publisher, Malheur Enterprise