



OREGONLIVE  
The Oregonian

From the desk of Senator Khanh Pham  
(SD 23)

# David vs. Goliath: Oregon bill offers lifeline for journalism — and democracy

Updated: Jun. 02, 2025, 10:44 a.m.  
Published: Jun. 02, 2025, 5:45 a.m.

**By John Maher, President &  
Publisher on behalf of The  
Oregonian/OregonLive**

Have you ever worked on a group project and then had someone else take full credit for your contributions? It's fundamentally unfair, isn't it?

And for Oregon news organizations, the pain is felt in the pocketbook.

Newspapers are businesses, and everyone knows our revenue model has changed radically as readers migrated to Big Tech platforms online. But Google

and Facebook have used our work to fuel their growth, without compensating us.

In an era where information is abundant but trust is scarce, local journalism remains one of the last bastions of accountability, transparency, and civic connection. Yet, across Oregon, newsrooms are shrinking, reporters are vanishing, and communities are losing access to the reliable information they need to make informed decisions.

**Senate Bill 686** offers a bold and necessary first step towards a solution.

This legislation would require dominant tech platforms—like Google and Meta—to compensate Oregon news organizations for using the content they scrape from our websites to drive traffic and profits. These platforms have used local reporting to generate significant profits for years, yet they return little to nothing to the journalists and publishers who produce it. SB686 would help correct that imbalance.

This is not a tax. It's not a subsidy. It's compensation for value taken in the form of direct payment to news organizations using formal arbitration or a research-backed fund to set benchmarks.

---

John Maher, "David vs. Goliath: Oregon Bill Offers Lifeline for Journalism — and Democracy (Opinion)," *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, June 2, 2025, <https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2025/06/opinion-david-vs-goliath-oregon-bill-offers-lifeline-for-journalism-and-democracy.html>. Republished in 51 local newspapers across Oregon (see last page)

Platforms scrape and summarize journalism, keeping users on their sites and siphoning away the revenue that once supported local reporting, and this problem has only gotten worse with the advent of artificial intelligence. The result? Fewer reporters, fewer investigations, and fewer watchdogs in our communities.

SB686 is modeled after other successful efforts. It ensures that 90% of the funds collected go directly to publishers, with the remaining 10% supporting innovation and equity in Oregon's media ecosystem. It's a plan that supports both large and small outlets, urban and rural, print and digital. And it creates a platform for additional investment in reporting across the entire state.

Critics claim this bill threatens free speech or innovation. But legal experts - including a former Oregon Supreme Court justice - have affirmed its constitutionality. And innovation doesn't mean exploitation. It's time for Big Tech to innovate responsibly and pay fairly.

Now, Big Tech is launching a fear campaign, threatening to throttle information in retaliation. This bill has broad support from journalists, publishers, labor unions, broadcasters, academics, and civic leaders - including Governor Tina Kotek.

At the end of the day, this isn't just about journalism. It's about democracy.

When local news disappears, civic engagement declines, corruption increases, and polarization deepens. SB686 is a chance to reverse that trend—to invest in the infrastructure of truth, trust, and community.

Typically fiercely competitive, news organizations around the state have united in support of this bill to publish this editorial. We urge all Oregonians to contact their state legislators to voice their support for SB686. Let's stand up for local news, for fair play, and for a future where every Oregonian has access to the information they need to thrive.

--The Oregonian/OregonLive is joined by 51 co-signers:

Argus Observer

BakerCityHerald.com

Beaverton Valley  
Times/Tigard-Tualatin Times

Bend Bulletin

Bluemountaineagle.com

Canby Herald-Pioneer

Cannon Beach Gazette

Central Oregonian (Prineville)

The Chronicle (Springfield)

Columbia Gorge News

Cottage Grove Sentinel

Coquille Valley Sentinel

Curry Coastal Pilot (Brookings)

Curry County Reporter

The Daily Astorian

East Oregonian

Estacada News

Eugene Register Guard

Forest Grove News-Times

Grants Pass Daily Courier

Herald and News

HermistonHerald.com

Hillsboro Tribune

The Gresham Outlook

LaGrandeObserver.com

Lake Oswego Review

Lakeview Examiner

Lincoln City Leader

The Madras Pioneer

McKenzieRiverReflections.com

Myrtle Point Herald

The Newberg Graphic

The New Era (Sweet Home)

The News-Register (McMinnville)

The News-Review (Roseburg)

North Coast Citizen

Oregon Newspaper Publishers  
Association

Polk Co. Itemizer Observer  
(Dallas)

Port Orford News

Redmond Spokesman

Rogue Valley Times (Medford)

The Sandy Post

South County Spotlight  
(Scappoose)

Seaside Signal

Siuslaw News (Florence)

Tillamook Headlight Herald

Wallowa.com

West Linn Tidings

Wilsonville Spokesman

Woodburn Independent

The World (Coos Bay)

