

Submitter: Travis Moore  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3431

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 3431. This bill proposes changes to the existing statute that would significantly undermine the effectiveness and integrity of legal notice publication, a vital component of our democracy.

Current law appropriately requires online news websites publishing legal notices to meet specific criteria, including maintaining an online e-edition in an archivable format and ensuring that at least half of their readers are paid subscribers. These requirements ensure that online platforms have a vested interest in preserving the accessibility and reliability of public notices. HB 3431 seeks to lower these standards, allowing any website that contains just 25% locally and originally composed content to qualify. This change would dilute the reliability of legal notice dissemination, reducing transparency and public access.

It is my understanding that some of these online news sources are currently offering legal notice publication at little to no cost. However, as with anything, you get what you pay for. The cost of printing legal notices in newspapers is not arbitrary—it reflects the investment in production, distribution, and archiving to ensure public accessibility. The price paid for these notices ensures they appear in print for the audience that prefers that format, on the newspaper's website in front of the paywall, and on the newspaper association's statewide publicnoticeoregon.com website, which consolidates all legal notices in Oregon in one place. Additionally, this cost helps support journalists who turn these notices into stories, keeping citizens engaged and informed. All of this must be protected so that community newspapers are not undermined by a website that produces only one out of four total stories each week. In rural areas especially, print newspapers remain the most effective way to reach citizens. The fact that individuals willingly pay a premium for print editions over digital alternatives is a clear indicator of their preferred method of receiving information.

Furthermore, I am not aware of any newspaper that has significantly raised its legal advertising rates in an unjustified manner. In fact, some publications, including mine, have not even increased rates to match recent inflation, absorbing some of the rising costs in an effort to continue serving their communities.

Simply because a cheaper option exists does not mean it is a better one. For decades, the public notice statute has wisely directed governments to select the

option that provides the "best actual notice." That principle should not be compromised.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject HB 3431 and preserve the integrity of legal notice publication.

Thank you for your time and consideration.