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SUBMITTED TESTIMONY
Senate Committee on Rules
Senate Bill 437

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The intent of legal public notices in Oregon is to put before Oregonians important information about their government, about their courts, about legal proceedings that may implicate their rights. Providing the best and broadest dissemination of such required notices should be public policy in Oregon, and Senate Bill 437 provides for a smart modernization of these practices.

I support the reforms in Senate Bill 437. I have spent my lifetime as a journalist in Oregon – more than a half century. That career, as a reporter, editor and news business owner, has focused on one primary goal: Serving the public interest. My family owns weekly newspapers in both urban and rural settings – Keizertimes in the Salem metro area and the Malheur Enterprise in small, rural Malheur County. I also am a co-founder and CEO of Salem Reporter, an all-digital news service serving local news needs in Salem.

The evolution of the news industry is apparent to all. Study after study shows that Americans increasingly turn to digital sources for information, whether it's on phones, laptops or other devices. This reform legislation does no more than reflect the modern era, where more people are getting their news online than in the traditional print newspaper. Submitted testimony from an Oregon company opposing similar legislation in the House in fact makes the case for the legislation. Note where the eyeballs are: "In Tillamook County we offer 3,500 print subscribers and over 130,000 online page views per month." The written testimony then declares: "Viewing is easy on laptops, desktops and smart phones."

Indeed, it is. The city of Salem last year elected to use Salem Reporter for its notices. With our service, every individual public notice from the city and other users is displayed on our home page, lives forever in a searchable digital archive, and is displayed on our social media channels at Facebook and Twitter. The point is that digital offers many ways to provide notice to the public – to get attention – in meaningful ways. This legislation leaves it to the public notice client how best to accomplish their goal. This legislation gives local governments in particular more choice.

As the city of Salem noted in publicly announcing its choice last year: "The City of Salem moved its public notices to the Salem Reporter starting in August, which is expected to yield thousands of dollars in savings over the course of each year."

This legislation for more transparency for Oregonians warrants your support.