

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

Local news organizations are essential to civic health, connecting people with critical information and holding the powerful accountable. However, the business model that sustained local journalism has collapsed over the past two decades. As Big Tech companies captured the vast majority of digital advertising revenue, local news outlets were left with shrinking resources, leading to newsroom closures, layoffs, and entire communities losing access to trusted information.

In Oregon, the result has been fewer journalists covering local government, schools, courts, and community life. Many rural areas, communities of color, and lower-income neighborhoods are now at risk of becoming or already are "news deserts."


SB 686 offers a chance to rebalance these systems. By requiring major tech platforms to fairly compensate Oregon's news publishers for the content that sustains their profits, this bill will return critical journalistic resources, such as full-time reporters, back to Oregon communities. Notably, it also establishes the **Oregon Civic Information Consortium**, which would help fund journalism initiatives that serve historically underrepresented populations, innovate how information is delivered, and rebuild trust between journalists and the people they serve.

Recognizing journalism as part of a broader civic health ecosystem opens up crucial opportunities. It shifts the conversation away from merely "saving journalism" to one that centers journalism's role in improving lives and strengthening democratic participation. It encourages news organizations to reconnect with their communities, listen more closely, collaborate more effectively, and ultimately become more resilient and sustainable.

Without action, more Oregon communities risk becoming news deserts, losing local journalism and essential pathways to civic engagement and community vitality. **SB 686 represents a meaningful and necessary step toward preserving and revitalizing local journalism in Oregon.**

I respectfully urge your support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Andrew DeVigal", with a stylized, cursive script.

Andrew DeVigal
Director, UO-SOJC's Agora Journalism Center
Endowed Chair in Journalism Innovation and Civic Engagement