

Submitter: Brad Fuqua  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB686

Committee members:

Senate Bill 686 does not help local journalism. If passed in its current form, it hurts local journalism because Oregon-based independent publishers at the community level will not benefit. It only helps troubled legacy newspapers with a formula that omits locally-owned news outlets such as Philomath News.

I'm an independent publisher that stepped in to provide news for my community after the nearby daily quit going to city meetings, sports and special events. Go to the PhilomathNews.com news site for an example of community news that matters to our local residents. Philomath News would not qualify with the minimum requirements in place. I'm a one-person staff that does it all and fall below the \$100,000 in annual revenue to qualify for funds. I would venture to guess that most small publications like mine fall under that number. I also don't qualify because I formed this operation as an LLC, not a nonprofit, and I do not have an International Standard Series number before Jan. 1, 2025.

This bill only threatens small news publishers who want to operate a sustainable business and rewards those with newsrooms with a head count.

In addition, Google and Facebook provides a major portion of the traffic to the Philomath News website. As I'm sure you know, Google shut off link traffic in California in response to similar legislation and Meta/Facebook does not allow links on their sites in Canada because of this type of law. If this happened, my hands would be tied to put together any level of legal opposition. Obviously, that would be a costly process beyond my limited budget.

I'm sure you've heard all of these positives from the legacy organizations when it comes to this bill. I have no beef with newspapers — I worked for legacy publications most of my career. The bill has positive qualities with the general idea in place. This money will not magically return the nearby daily paper to cover Philomath again.

There are deeper issues going on there with out-of-state companies pulling the strings and failing to create workable business models. Maybe you could consider the impacts on local publishers like myself that are just battling day-to-day to make ends meet and report on the news. This bill leaves us out.