



Community supported news in Newberg.

Submitter:

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Committee:

State of Oregon - Senate Committee On Rules

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Topic:

SB 686

Subject:

Newsberg is neutral on SB 686 due to a preference toward large, out-of-state, conglomerate-owned legacy media outlets.

I'm writing as the founding editor of Newsberg, a locally owned and operated news outlet serving the Newberg and Dundee communities. I appreciate the effort behind SB 686 to address the erosion of local journalism in Oregon and agree that supporting a robust, diverse media ecosystem is vital to civic health. However, I have significant concerns about the bill as it is currently written and urge you to consider adjustments to better include and support independent, start up, and community-based newsrooms.

While the bill admirably seeks to bolster journalism through new funding mechanisms and the creation of a Civic Information Consortium, its current structure seems weighted toward large, corporate-owned media outlets—many of which are headquartered out of state. These organizations, while playing a role in Oregon's news landscape, are not always equipped or incentivized to serve the needs of small and rural communities with consistent, high-quality coverage.

Independent, start-up, and hyperlocal outlets like Newsberg operate on lean budgets and are deeply embedded in their communities. We report on city council decisions, local business developments, school events, and neighborhood stories that often go uncovered by larger organizations. Yet, the eligibility requirements for funding outlined in SB 686 risk sidelining these very publications—limiting our ability to grow, hire, and innovate while providing substantial support to our externally owned, multimillion (and sometimes billion) dollar enterprises.

The proposed Civic Information Consortium, in particular, holds promise as a vehicle for equity and experimentation within Oregon journalism. I believe this portion of the bill could provide essential resources to homegrown startups and community publications that are nimble, connected, and reflective of the communities they serve. However, the allocation of just 10% of the bill's resources toward these organizations undercuts that potential. I believe that number should be higher, and be geared directly toward serving underserved communities in the rural and suburban areas of the state.

To truly strengthen Oregon's information infrastructure, SB 686 must do more to include and invest in smaller, independent outlets. That includes adjusting funding formulas, loosening eligibility restrictions, and ensuring that any legislative support isn't just about replacing what was lost in legacy newsrooms—but about building a more responsive and inclusive future for local news. These locally-owned media outlets are at the cutting edge of local news, and with consistent funding through a bill like SB 686, can set the pace for reinventing newsrooms in Oregon and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to share more about the challenges and opportunities faced by independent publishers as this important discussion moves forward.

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