



**April 9, 2025**

**Thank you all for addressing the local news problem that we are all trying to solve. It's a knotty issue and I'm glad to tell you we are launching Lookout Eugene-Springfield tomorrow. Within a month or so, our newsroom of 15 will be fully staffed and eager to cover the local stories of Lane County. We have received incredible local support with more than 200 local financial donors helping us get off the ground. And we appreciate the Legislature's recognition of the wider problem of local news loss throughout Oregon.**

**This year marks my 50th year in journalism, and it all started for me at the UO School of Journalism and Communications. I have a long arc in Oregon journalism as we launch Lookout, and broad experience as a journalist, news executive for Knight Ridder newspapers and now local news start-up founder. Along the way, I covered the fast-changing business of news for a decade, and the impact the platforms have had on it. I am very familiar with efforts to address news loss throughout the country and praise Rebuild Local News' wide-ranging efforts to offer solutions. And I support the idea of an Oregon civic news network. I participated in the years-long debates in California as that legislature wrestled with similar issues.**

**I just became aware of this bill in play a week ago and am still digging through it.**

**On it, I start with a simple proposition: Do no harm.**

**The entire news industry, large and small, legacy and startup, is under multiple pressure, and that's only been heightened by the new Administration. Whatever the legislature may opt to do, I ask that you follow that principle: do no harm. Here's a fact that most don't understand: Well less than half of the traffic that news publishers get to their websites comes directly to them. About a third comes via Google search and maybe half that via Facebook, and Meta's Instagram helps indirectly as well.**

**Any legislative action that puts that traffic at risk immediately dangers our ability to both sell subscriptions and advertising. Those are the two main components of any smart news business model.**



**In Canada, we've already seen the impact of Meta's pullback - both overall and specifically as citizens have tried to alert fellow citizens in times of crisis, like wildfires.**

**Fair or unfair, the platforms have demonstrated their ability and their willingness to cut off such traffic in the face of "bargaining code" legislation. We cannot put such traffic at risk.**

**Secondly, there is the reality of time and money. If passed as written, costly, time-consuming lawsuits will follow. Even if the state should win, any payments to publishers would likely be delayed by years. Highly stressed publishers are unlikely to see money when they need it.**

**And here is a really important public policy point that I'd like Oregon legislators to really consider. Does the state want to help bail out financially driven companies, which have exacerbated the local news decline in Oregon, taking vulture profits out of declining businesses. Just in the past year, we've seen Mississippi-based Carpenter Media Group buy up almost 40 titles in Oregon and immediately began layoffs that meant far less news to many communities.**

**Yes, money directed to OPB and the Oregonian can be justified, and serves the Portland area best, but much of the rest of the state has both newspaper and broadcast ownership that is cutting and consolidating. Just yesterday, it was reported Sinclair Broadcasting and its fellow chains have pressed the new FCC for further relaxation of ownership, allowing more monopoly and duopoly. If this bill as written were passed and funded, I'd believe these companies would figure out ways to take the new money and hire over here, while cutting over there. Call it take and switch.**

**There is no doubt that Oregon's local press, aimed at community service and not profit maximization, needs. I further praise FORJ and Heidi Wright's work to bolster the state's rural press. What can the legislature best do that would make a difference – and now?**

**I'd point to the impressive work that Rebuild Local News has done in pressing for state tax incentives that can make a difference on day one of their enactment.**

**These include:**

- **tax credits for subscribers to local news;**
- **tax credits for advertisers on local news publications,**
- **Employer tax credits for hiring and retaining journalists**



- **State government advertising set-asides that both support local news media and reach their readers with information they need**
- **A state fellowship program that enables the hiring of young, diverse journalists to bring communities more local news.**

**All of these are in play across the country. Each will make a difference. Collectively, they can make a huge difference.**

**As legislation is debated and refined, I'd urge you to consider their inclusion.**

**Thank you for your time.**

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