

News in the Grove

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Committee: State of Oregon - Senate Rules Committee Oregon State Capitol 900 Court St NE
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Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Rules Committee —

I am an independent Oregon journalist, publishing since I was fresh out of high school, when I launched an online independent rural news publication called the Gales Creek Journal in my home "town" of Gales Creek, nestled in the foothills of the northern Oregon Coast Range.

Since then, we've expanded to the city of Banks (population: 2,000), and I launched News in the Grove in the fine city of Forest Grove just a few months ago in December.

I applaud the legislature's efforts to tackle the serious decline of journalism in Oregon. It's something I've been fighting for more than ten years, often on my own.

I'm in favor of the concept that SB 686 represents: Requiring the massive tech companies that build their products from my work, from my labor, to pay me for it.

But there are serious flaws in this bill that appear to be structured in a way that primarily benefits large, out-of-state legacy media conglomerates while hurting Oregon-owned, largely rural newsrooms that are aggressively innovating to thrive in the 21st century.

Revenue requirement

Despite publishing online since 2013 and in print since 2017, I have never made even close to the \$100,000 annual revenue threshold requirement to qualify for funds. Many indie newsrooms, especially outside of the Portland Metro area never will. This requirement will leave many newsrooms that need these funds the most out of the equation.

Funding distribution favors 'thin' journalism chains

I have watched in horror as our local newspapers, already struggling under their former owner, have been decimated by their new owners. They have laid off hard-working staff, and even closed a newspaper in Sherwood a mere eight weeks after buying it. They could and should have fought to keep journalism alive in Sherwood.



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What's to stop these same owners from hoovering up the funds created by this bill and siphoning it right out of Oregon?

Quantity does not equal quality.

SB 686 must do more to support small, independent news outlets rooted in their communities.

I urge the members of the committee to consider adjusting funding formulas, loosening the eligibility to ensure locally owned and operated, rural and small newsrooms are not inadvertently hurt by this legislation, and ensuring publishers like myself have a voice moving forward.

I respectfully urge this committee to amend SB 686 to ensure it equitably supports all Oregon newsrooms, especially those most vulnerable yet most vital to their communities.

Thank you for your time.

Chas Hundley

