



April 9, 2025

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Rules Committee:

My name is Mai Hoang, I am the executive board president of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, and I want to express strong support for SB 686.

The Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild (The NewsGuild-Communication Workers of America Local #37082) represents more than 350 workers in Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Idaho. We are united in the belief that strong jobs preserve strong journalism in the Northwest.

Our members include journalists at *The Bulletin* in Bend, hence our interest in this bill. These journalists live in Bend and the surrounding area. They are at the front lines of documenting the growth and change in Bend, Redmond and the surrounding Central Oregon region. Much has been made that Carpenter Media, an out-of-state company, owns this paper. But ultimately, the journalists who work at the Bulletin are local. They interact with residents and decision-makers daily. Their stories are vital for Bend residents to make critical civic decisions. The money they earn pays for groceries and other necessities, as well as fun trips in the region's beautiful recreational areas, stimulating the local economy.

As a union, we are deeply committed to combating the decline of local news and supporting local journalism jobs across the state of Oregon. Oregon newspapers shed $\frac{3}{4}$ of their jobs since 2001, cutting thousands of jobs as they downsize or stop printing altogether, according to data from the Oregon Employment Department.

This has created news deserts in many rural communities in Oregon. Often, the journalists who work in publications are asked to cover multiple beats and geographic areas once handled by multiple reporters, photographers and producers.

Many of those job losses include those represented by our union local, and we have had to fight to ensure these workers receive severance and other benefits to ensure a smooth transition to a new job. Unfortunately, many of these journalists end up leaving the industry for good for better-paying, less volatile, careers.

Unfortunately, in recent years, The Bulletin, like many other publications nationwide, has also cut staff as publications have struggled to generate the revenue needed to retain them. While our union doesn't always agree with publications' decisions when cutting costs — and aren't shy about expressing that disagreement at the bargaining table— we do agree on the inherent unfairness of large digital platforms making massive amounts of advertising money off the stories, photographs and other content produced by local journalists and published by these news publications.

There remains a clear need for local news and journalism not found in larger national and regional publications. Citizens are left to make crucial decisions regarding themselves, their families and their communities and often depend on local news outlets to guide them in that decision-making process.

Working journalists provide the content, including stories, photography and video, that Oregonians find on Google and other digital platforms. When there are fewer journalists, there's less reliable information that Oregonians can access.

Those expressing opposition to this bill, and others like it, keep talking about the “corporations and conglomerates” that own these newspapers. However, Alphabet and Meta are global corporations that operate virtual monopolies. Gannett, one of the largest newspaper chains in the nation, has a net worth of around **\$400 million**. That's far below the net worth of Meta, Facebook's parent company, and Alphabet, Google's parent company, which are approaching a net worth of **\$2 trillion**.

It is clear what is happening here. Google, Meta and other digital platforms have made millions, even billions of dollars, on the backs of journalists. They'll throw some cash to start-up news organizations as a performative measure to show they “care” about journalism and journalists.

However, it speaks volumes that these platforms' response to this bill and others proposed in other states is to threaten to censor and take away news content from their sites and deprive their users of valuable and vetted information. They call it a business decision – I call it a refusal to properly pay the news outlets – and the journalists who work for them. This is precisely the predatory relationship that has put the news industry in the powerless position it's been in at

the hands of these digital platforms, leaving them no choice but to cut the people who produce the content crucial for residents and a healthy and thriving Democracy.

This bill will allow news outlets the funds needed to increase capacity to cover important news affecting Oregonians. We strongly support the bill's provision for publications to set aside 70% to hire additional staff. We also support labor representation in the Oregon Civic Information Consortium.

SB 686 will greatly support the growth of local journalism across the state and ensure that local journalists can continue delivering the news Oregonians deserve. We urge the committee's steadfast consideration and passage of the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mai Hoang', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mai Hoang
Executive board president
Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild
The NewsGuild-Communication Workers of America Local #37082