

Submitter: Mark Garber
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government
Measure, Appointment or SB1580
Topic:

Chair Meek, Vice Chair Drazan and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Government:

I support Senate Bill 1580 because it provides the best opportunity to reverse the decline of local journalism in Oregon.

By way of background, I'm a former publisher who worked in Oregon journalism for 44 years and managed newspapers in Eastern Oregon, Lane County, Central Oregon and the Portland metro area. My final 12 years in the newspaper business was as the president of the Pamplin Media Group, which at the time was Oregon's largest source of local news.

Over those decades in journalism, I saw just how important it is to have a credible and trusted source of information in our communities. Local journalists are the watchdogs that hold institutions accountable, and they also are the chroniclers for their communities, covering everything from youth sports to the needs of local nonprofit organizations. Our collective community fabric has been held together by journalists, but today that fabric is fraying, in part because of the exploitation of journalists' work by mega-tech platforms.

Now, with the rise of artificial intelligence, Big Tech can plagiarize local news articles and convert them into "AI summaries" without compensation to the organizations that employ journalists to gather the news. Senate Bill 1580 will require the biggest of these tech platforms to come to an agreement with Oregon publishers and broadcasters about the use of their content. This agreement will lead to fair compensation for the organizations that employ journalists.

My strong support for this bill is based on the requirement that 90 percent of any compensation paid to journalism providers be spent on news journalists and support staff. This ensures that the money will stay here in Oregon, employing a growing number journalists who will, through their work, build stronger communities throughout the state.

As the committee evaluates testimony from people on all sides of this issue, I respectfully ask that you consider their possible motivations. Some journalists who have spoken against the bill are receiving financial support from Big Tech, and those conflicts of interest should be disclosed and taken into account.

Personally, I no longer have any direct involvement with companies employing journalists in Oregon. My only concern is for journalism itself. Senate Bill 1580 is our best chance to reverse the decline and begin rebuild the information infrastructure that holds our communities together.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

-J. Mark Garber
Writer and editor
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Gresham resident