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March 29, 2017  
Chair Chuck Riley  
Senate Committee on General Government & Accountability  
900 Court Street, NE, Salem

Dear Chair Riley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association on Senate Bill 210.

Pamplin Media Group consists of 23 community newspapers in Oregon. The papers that make up our company are thriving, robust weekly newspapers that have been the primary source of information in their communities for, in most cases, 100 years or more. These newspapers continue to be the major source of information for their communities both in print and online.

As community newspapers, the Pamplin Media Group's newspapers are representative of the 82 newspapers that make up the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. These newspapers cover communities throughout Oregon and they reach 83 percent of all Oregon adults each week, both in print and online.

Readership of Oregon newspapers remains very strong, and Oregonians expect to receive important legal and public notices in their newspapers.

The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association has found through extensive research that the public has an intense interest in legal and public notice. And the place where they want to be notified is their local newspaper. Newspapers have performed this role quite well for more than 100 years. People are accustomed to seeing legal notices in newspapers. Independent research shows that 77 percent of Oregon adults read the public notices in newspapers, and they prefer printed newspapers and newspaper websites as the place to find public notices.

The bill before you today would allow some of the most important legal notices --those involving cities, counties and special districts -- be removed from newspapers and placed on three different obscure websites.

We believe there is a huge difference between making a record of a foreclosure on a website vs. actually notifying the public through a newspaper. If a notice is placed only on a government or association website, only people who have knowledge of that website will know to go and look for the notice. This can create a closed loop, where only those people who are already aware of those websites will be alerted to the important public issues.

In contrast, notification through a community newspaper will alert thousands of people to activity occurring in their community. Newspaper readers come across public notices as a normal part of reading the newspaper; this means they will be alerted to actions and information in their community that they might not otherwise seek out.

In addition to publishing these notices in the printed versions of our newspapers, our company also publishes these public notices online. Plus, the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association has operated a statewide website for public notices since 1999. As a condition of their membership in the association, newspapers are required to upload all of their public notices to the statewide website.

So, requiring notice through a newspaper actually provides notice in three ways: In the newspaper's print edition; on the newspaper's website; and on the statewide ONPA website. Any additional online notification is really redundant, and replacing newspaper publication as allowed under SB 210 would eliminate most true public notice.

Research by ONPA shows that people both want and expect public notices to be published where they have always appeared: in their local newspaper. We believe Senate Bill 210 would prevent Oregonians from receiving proper notification of important actions occurring within those communities.

Thank you for your consideration of ONPA's strong opposition to SB 210.

Mark Garber

President of Pamplin Media Group's Newspaper Division

Member of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association's legislative committee