

Submitter: Doug Bates
On Behalf Of: Highway 58 Herald
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2605

Date: February 8, 2023

To: House Committee on Rules

From: Doug Bates, editor emeritus, Highway58Herald.org

Re: Support for Protect Local Journalism, HB 2605

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the committee:

I'm a longtime newspaper journalist who came out of retirement in 2021 to help found Highway58Herald.org. It still clings to survival today as a nonprofit online news site that seeks heroically to fill the news vacuum that plagues Oakridge and all the other small, rural communities along the 87-mile-long Highway 58 corridor southeast of Eugene.

The weekly newspapers that served these Oregon communities have ceased publishing. Eugene's struggling newspaper and TV stations have quit covering local news in these towns. The resulting news desert threatens the economic viability and social fabric of these communities while giving rise to petty corruption in local government, free from scrutiny except for the Highway 58 Herald.

Protect Local Journalism, HB 2605, would be a welcome form of support to help our volunteer venture survive. It would also give a boost to Oregon's remaining commercial press in providing local journalism that is vital to this state's well-being.

For these reasons, I urge your support for Protecting Local Journalism and plead for the measure to be funded fully. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Doug Bates
Eugene, Oregon