



Chair Fahey and Members of the House Rules Committee:

In recent months, Oregon saw three community weekly newspapers shuttered and the closure of the proud longtime daily newspaper, the Medford Mail Tribune. With more such closures expected, the Greater Oregon chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) respectfully urges you to move House Bill 2605 forward toward passage.

SPJ is the association of working reporters and editors in all forms of news media: Print, broadcast, and web based. Our members across the state believe that journalism is a public service providing Oregonians with crucial information about their communities and world. News coverage deters corruption and waste, and just helps make democracy work. It gives people information about trends and decisions affecting them as well as backgrounding candidates and issues to foster good decision-making.

However, the rise of the internet has decimated the business model supporting much of journalism, leading to the loss of hundreds if not thousands of journalists in Oregon alone. All of Oregon is affected, but the problem is particularly acute in rural Oregon, where large swathes of the state constitute “news deserts.”

SPJ considers the project led by the Fund for Rural Oregon Journalism to be a necessary step toward addressing this alarming trend. Our hope is that this project will work inclusively with likeminded efforts such as the Oregon News Exploration and the Oregon Public Information Partnership, and emulate the progress already made elsewhere by entities like New Jersey Civic Information Consortium. We also hope that the important research proposed by the Agora Journalism Center will involve working journalists in key roles to maximize impact around the state.

In sum, please vote yes on HB 2605. Thank you for your consideration.

Signed,
Society of Professional Journalists Board of Directors

Lobbyist Contact: Tom Holt