

THE WORLD COMPANY.

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The Honorable Mark Hutton, chairman, House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

Re: HB 2237

From: Scott Stanford, General Manager, The World Co.

I am writing you concerning House Bill 2237 pertaining to the use of the Internet for official publications. As a veteran newspaper journalist and the general manager of the *Lawrence Journal-World*, I fear this bill would do great damage to newspapers, local governments and most importantly, the public good.

Because of the depth and reach of community newspapers, existing public notice law has worked effectively for decades to keep citizens well informed of local government activity. Community newspapers are overwhelmingly the most trusted source for coverage of local government. In fact, in the majority of Kansas communities, the local newspaper is the singular source for unbiased coverage of local school boards, city councils, planning commissions, water districts and more. The rapid growth of Internet "news" has only reinforced this civic role. In an era of blogging, social media and BuzzFeed, newspapers are relied upon more than ever to serve as beacons of credibility in a sea of random information. And newspapers remain where the public looks, where the public expects, to find local government public notices. There simply is no substitute.

In the fall of 2014, the *Journal-World* surveyed more than 2,000 adults in Douglas County. In that survey, 82 percent said they spend as much or more time reading the print edition of the *Journal-World* as they do reading the website, ljworld.com. In fact, 25 percent said they only read the print edition. This represents a sizable portion — more than 23,000 residents — of our potential audience who is left out any time we publish to the Internet something that is not also published in the print newspaper. We rarely, if ever, do this. The overwhelming majority of our content, including all public notices, is published both in print and online.

In Lawrence, allowing local governments to publish public notices only to a designated website would diminish public access, public visibility and public awareness of such notices. It would diminish the oversight and accountability the *Journal-World* provides in the public notice process. Finally, it would diminish funding available to continue the *Journal-World's* role as the primary watchdog of local government. House Bill 2237 would indisputably diminish the public good.

Sincerely,



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