

March 16, 2015

To: Rep. Mark Hutton, chairman, House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Ervan Stuewe, Wabaunsee County Signal-Enterprise, on HB 2237

My name is Ervan Stuewe. I am the editor of the *Wabaunsee County Signal-Enterprise* in Alma, Kansas. It is the only remaining newspaper in the county. At one time there were several. I also am a Wabaunsee County Commissioner. I would like to share a few comments with you as a representative of both entities.

Twenty-five years ago my wife and I purchased a declining newspaper in Alma, the county seat for Wabaunsee County. At that time there were around 400 subscribers. During the past twenty-five years we, at one time, had tripled our subscriber base. Those numbers have decreased slightly in the past five years, but through those years we have worked hard to rebuild and maintain the thread of information to the residents of Wabaunsee County. During this 25 year period the only other newspaper in the county, in Eskridge, struggled and failed.... twice. The first time we purchased it and combined it with our current newspaper. The second time it just dissolved.

Our newspaper represents all seven communities and two school districts in Wabaunsee County. Between another reporter and myself we attend the majority of the city council meetings, school board meetings and the county commission meetings. Every week that we publish the paper, news is shared about what is happening in the county. We also provide many free promotional articles for our communities.

It is no secret that a good portion of our financial support (nearly 1/3) comes from legal publications from the county, cities, school districts, townships, improvement districts and cemetery boards. Loss of that revenue will jeopardize our existence as a small town business.

As county commissioner during the last 12 years, I have looked closely at budgets for the departments within our county. Our elected officials and department heads do a great job managing their department. They manage their funds as if they were managing their own money, and our constituents should be proud of their efforts. While there are many issues that cause strain upon those department head budgets, being transparent and sharing important information with the taxpayers is not one of them. This is information that taxpayers look forward to and expect to see in the local paper.

All people living in Wabaunsee County do not have access to the Internet or use it on a regular basis. While some residents may be followers of Facebook, I can assure you that the vital legal information of our area will not be sought out and read at county and city websites.

I sincerely request your support for the many small town newspapers that will suffer greatly if the proposal to post legal publications on the Internet is adopted. I fear the result will be that the only link of information that ties small towns and communities together will die - as so many newspapers already have. Please support our small businesses and oppose House Bill No. 2237.

Sincerely,
Ervan Stuewe, Editor
Wabaunsee County Signal-Enterprise
(785) 765-3327
signal@embarqmail.com