

March 14, 2023

**House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
Senate Bill 2143**

Good morning Chairman Louser and Members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee:

My name is Amy Wobbema, President of the North Dakota Newspaper Association and publisher of two weekly newspapers in central North Dakota - the New Rockford Transcript and the Foster County Independent.

I'm writing in opposition to SB 2143, the bill that would exempt county and state mutual insurance companies from publishing abstracts in newspapers.

As I understand it, the original intent of this bill as sponsored by Sen. Mark Weber was to exempt county mutual insurance companies only from publishing their abstracts once annually as per Century Code.

Newspapers are the place to put public notices, including insurance abstracts. We are non-partisan, private entities and are the source for all public notices currently required by state law. Further, a 2020 statewide survey conducted by Coda Ventures on behalf of NDNA found that 86% of North Dakota adults read a newspaper at least weekly, and 88% of them turn to newspapers when they are seeking public notices.

One of the arguments I have heard in favor of this bill is that people look to the internet for this information, not newspapers. If that is the case, they will find those same insurance abstracts on our state public notice website, <http://ndpublicnotices.newzgroup.com/>. North Dakota newspapers led the way in establishing this statewide home on the internet for all public notices published by newspapers throughout the state, another service we provide to both government and industry. Public notices are available there for anyone to read for free, with no subscription required.

If insurance abstracts are removed from newspapers and put solely online, I am concerned about how they will be archived for future reference. For more than 100 years, the State Historical Society has been archiving every North Dakota newspaper, whether published in print or e-edition. This means that all public notices, including insurance abstracts, are available in the newspaper archives to be accessed at any time by North Dakota citizens, indefinitely.

Chairman Louser and Committee Members, as the bill stands today, I don't support it. I ask for a "do not pass" on SB 2143.

This bill has been changed from its original intent twice, and NDNA has agreed to support it only if it is amended to narrow the scope of the exemption to county mutual insurance companies only, as Sen. Weber first proposed.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and I am willing to answer any questions you may have. You can direct questions to me by email at amywobbema@gmail.com.