

Jan. 18, 2023

House Political Subdivisions Committee
House Bill 1197

Chairman Longmuir and Committee Members,

My name is Amy Dalrymple and I'm editor of The Bismarck Tribune and the Mandan News. I'm also past president of the North Dakota Newspaper Association.

I would like to voice my support for a Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1197, the Public Notice Modernization bill. The bill would extend the definition of publish to include a newspaper's e-edition, allowing a public notice to appear in a digital e-edition.

I don't expect this bill to immediately have an impact on The Bismarck Tribune, as we currently print a newspaper six days a week. Our public notices appear in print and in our digital e-edition. Our public notices also are available on the Tribune website free of charge to non-subscribers and available to non-subscribers through a website established by the North Dakota Newspaper Association.

Newspapers have changed significantly since I began in this industry over 20 years ago. Often the change is rapid and in response to shifts in reader habits as more look online for their news. The bill sets up a framework to allow newspapers to continue to be the custodian of public information even as newspaper print schedules change.

A survey conducted by an independent firm in 2020 found that nearly 9 out of 10 North Dakotans say local newspapers or newspaper websites are trusted more for public notice information than city newsletters and government or non-government websites. This bill allows for newspapers to continue to be the trusted source of public information.

One reason newspapers are the best custodians of public notices is that we already have a system in place for every newspaper to be archived. The Bismarck Tribune will turn 150 this year, and our editions are available to the public at the State Archives. The staff at the State Archives already have been keeping a copy of our Sunday and holiday e-editions, and I appreciate that this bill codifies that in the law.

I respectfully ask for a Do Pass recommendation on House Bill 1197. Thank you for your support to keep North Dakota public notices accessible. I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have.