

CHAIRMAN WARREY AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

My name is Art Hagebock. I am the owner and publisher of four weekly newspapers in southeast North Dakota. They are the LaMoure Chronicle, Kulm Messenger, Litchville Bulletin, and the Enderlin Independent.

Please accept this testimony "IN FAVOR" of House Bill 1398.

I have been in the newspaper industry since 1980. I have owned my four newspapers since 2012. I also am very involved with my communities that I have papers in. I sit on the LaMoure Community Development Corporation board, St. Rose Care Center nursing home board, American Legion, LaMoure County Housing Authority board, LaMoure Chamber Retailers, James River Sportsman Club, and recently retired fire chief after fifteen years as the chief. I attend or I have an employee attend every School Board, City Council, and County Commission we can and report the stories in our papers. I do not tell you these things to be boisterous, I tell you this because I know how vital the local newspapers are to getting information out to the public. The public also expects my newspapers to give them all the public information they need and want. The web and social media are great tools for information but anytime anybody really wants to make sure that their information is seen, they put that information in their local small town newspaper.

I am having a real hard time comprehending the fact that the publication of the Insurance Abstracts have been published in every newspaper in the state for nearly one hundred years and one person's interpretation of the law would suggest that it is wrong to do it that way. It would seem to me that this is saying that every legislator and insurance commissioner has been doing this wrong for over a hundred years. If we are going to let one person dictate and change policy because of their opinion, then why do we go through the process of legislation.

In my opinion, anytime we make it harder for the public to get information from the government, the easier it will be for the government to not be held accountable. I know that every one of my subscribers will read the content of my newspapers because they pay for it and believe its content.

Please consider my thoughts as you vote in favor of this bill.