

Sarah Elmquist Squires
North Dakota Newspaper Association
HB1062
Against

Dear Reps. Lefor, Keiser, Adams, Anderson, Hagert, Kasper, Louser, Nehring, O'Brien, Ostlie, Ruby, Schauer, Stemen and Thomas:

I'm writing to you, members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee, urging you to vote "no" on HB 1062.

As a representative of the state's newspapers, I see the harm that this bill could do to main streets across our state. Insurance public notices bring in \$670,000 annually to newspapers, most of which are small town, community papers that are the heart of rural life in North Dakota. Newspapers are also the bellwether of local economies, and have worked hard to continue to share our community stories and news despite the economic challenges experienced by most family businesses during these uncertain times. For some papers, this could be a final blow after decades – some more than a century – of weathering all types of historic hardships for generations. And for what? Who does this bill benefit? Certainly not your constituents, your Main Street, or your town.

The tourism folks always tell us that for each dollar brought into your community, the local economic benefit is sevenfold. Whether you agree with that math, over half a million in outside funds to communities in our state is significant. Hiding notices on insurance company websites isn't a benefit to your district or constituents. It could be a blip on an out-of-state insurance company spreadsheet, but it would definitely be another economic blow to our hometowns during a time when we're all struggling to get back on our feet.

The purpose and benefit of public notices is that they are accessible to the public. But 34% of seniors don't go online, and 22% of rural folks don't have access to the web. According to NDNA's 2020 state survey, 86% of North Dakotans read newspapers, and that's where they go to find public notices. That's where public notices should stay.

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to public testimony about HB 1062. Please vote to keep insurance public notices – and the out-of-state dollars that come with them – in our hometown newspapers.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Elmquist Squires
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