

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

House Industry, Business & Labor Committee  
SB 2143

CHAIRMAN LOUSER AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

My name is Jack McDonald. I'm appearing on behalf of the North Dakota Newspaper Association (NDNA). We oppose SB 2143 as it is before you, but support Sen. Weber's proposed amendment and will not oppose the bill as amended.

There has been no great demand for this bill. Our state's founding fathers wanted this, and we don't see any reason to change that. It was first enacted in much the form it is in today in 1895 as part of North Dakota's Revised Code, just six years after statehood, and has been on the books since then. It was renumbered a bit in 1983 as part of a massive revision of the Insurance Code and has been unchanged since then.

So why do we need to change it now? Our state's Founding Fathers felt citizens needed to know basic information about the insurance companies that serve them. These publications are paid for by the insurance companies – by and large out of state corporations. This is out-of-state money being invested in small North Dakota businesses.

Let's take a random look at some of the totals. In 2022, The Mandan News received \$4,888.65 and The Bismarck Tribune \$4,944.13. The Cass County Reporter received \$4,721.43. The Grand Forks Herald \$9,777.30. The New Rockford Transcript \$5,526.30. The four newspapers in Nelson County – The Aneta Star, The Lakota American, The McVile Messenger and The Nelson County Arena - \$39,321.75.

Three North Dakota weekly newspapers closed last year. There are now three communities that will no longer see their kid's graduation pictures in the local newspaper. Or see local sports stories or high school honor awards. They won't see stories about their city and county commissions, or what their local legislators are doing.

If these insurance abstracts are not published where they do business then where will they be? They will be tucked away some place on the Insurance Commissioner's web page.

I'm sure most North Dakotans, whether in Fessenden, Mandan, Grand Forks or Belfield, do not sit down at their morning breakfast tables and say, "Gee, I'd like to scroll through the Insurance Commissioner's web page this morning just see what's new".

You know that's not going to happen. These abstracts will be tucked away where they are likely not to be seen by anybody except other insurance companies and agents, and not North Dakota citizens.

NDNA respectfully requests that you amend this bill so that North Dakotans can still see most of the information about their insurance companies.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

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