

The Range Ledger Publishing Company

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The Honorable Members of the  
House Business Affairs & Labor Committee

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in regard to HB 19-1057. Currently each county is required to publish monthly warrants, salaries of all county employees and the semiannual financial report in a legal newspaper. The legislation, if passed and signed by the Governor, would allow counties to publish this information on the county website instead of a legal newspaper. In my humble opinion, that would be a great disservice to the citizens and taxpayers for many reasons.

**One and the most critical, the lack of transparency.** Not everyone has a computer or the greatest internet service. Many entities have a website and an individual can spend hours and hours searching this website and that website. In other words, bogged down, and sometimes some websites are confusing. Try searching a school's financial information on a website. I have and it is confusing and can take hours to determine an answer to a specific financial question. Unfortunately there has been discussion that a county is the only entity required to publish financial information in a newspaper. Should there be a change for the entities not required for transparency sake? After all shouldn't citizens and taxpayers have easy access to what their tax dollar is used for? In some instances, the lack of transparency leads to corruption.

In Cheyenne County, 18% of the population is over the age of 65. That age group votes and they want to know what is going on. My parents, Bill and Joyce Escudero, ages 87 and 85 and owners of The Range Ledger Publishing Company, will be left out in the cold as far as this bill's language because they want to read this information in a newspaper. My mother is never online. Dad is rarely. **It is difficult for older people to sit in front of a computer and try to read for periods of time.** My father was very upset when the Denver Post quit rural delivery. I won't state here the words he had for personnel at the Denver Post when suggested he subscribe to an online subscription, which he didn't. By the way, my mother is known to call state and federal elected officials frequently. My parents pay attention.

Furthermore, in our rural setting, the local paper is still well read and covers activities of the county, is the go to source for not just county financial information, but school functions and activities and

business of the cities in the county and other government entities. Research shows that newspapers, especially in less populated parts of the country and state are still the source for information.

**Newspapers bring a wide variety of news and information together — in one place.**

**Cost** to Cheyenne County to publish the three items in the local paper, which is being touted as one justification of this legislation, is: monthly warrants published 12 times a year — \$2,700.00 total cost; semiannual financial report - \$900.00 total cost; semiannual salaries of all county employees - \$200.00 total cost. That adds up to a total of \$3,800.00 per year to the county with a 2019 total budget of 6.3 million. In the big picture, the cost is extremely minimal. If passed, will this legislation break this newspaper? No, but it will make a lot of citizens very unhappy.

This idea and legislation is premature and will not serve the public well as a whole. As we all know there is a free public notice website where newspapers, who publish legal information, upload legal notices as well.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bogenhagen

Publisher of The Range Ledger