

OPINION

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First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Guest Editorial

An existential threat to Kentucky's community newspapers

By Scott White
The Woodford Sun

Community journalists across Kentucky are raising alarms about House Bill 368, which would end a requirement to publish legal notices in local newspapers. The measure cleared the Kentucky House 62-30 on Feb. 26.

Jane Ashley Pace, immediate past president of the Kentucky Press Association and publisher of *The Oldham Era* and the *Henry County Local*, recently wrote that HB 368 would decrease government transparency and could cost some smaller, rural counties their local newspaper.

The following is an edited version of a column published in the *Woodford Sun* written by Sun managing editor Scott White.

Just when you think things are turning around. . . .

The Kentucky General Assembly is considering House Bill 368, which, if passed into law, would pose a very real threat to the *Woodford Sun*'s ability to stay open. Let me explain.

As many of you know from prior columns, we here at the *Sun* have been laser-focused on saving this county's 156-year-old voice from extinction. This is not crying wolf — community newspapers in Kentucky and around the country have been failing at a steady rate.

The *Sun* has not turned a profit since 2015. We are a bare bones staff. Even so, our publisher Ben Chandler is committed to keeping this newspaper locally owned, locally focused and open. We are the sole source of Woodford County hard news, features, community doings, local sports and you name it. Everything we print is relevant to anyone living or doing business in or enjoying Woodford County.

Even being small, I am pretty proud of the job we do, and based on what many of you call, text or email me or stop and tell me, most folks agree.

I can't tell you how many folks have stopped me to say, "You guys can do it, we need the *Sun*. Don't sell or close. The *Sun* is indispensable."

Many of you have renewed for two years. Many seniors ignore the discount price and pay the full amount. Some of you have increased the number of times you advertise — or increased the number of times you run an ad.

Thank you.

And, according to data from the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, there are a lot of you out there supporting the *Sun*.

The institute reports out of 120 community newspapers in Kentucky, we are 30th in community penetration at 29% — which represents the percentage of residents who read our paper. This is calculated by totaling the average in-county mail and single-copy sales numbers on our annual postal statement and dividing that total by the number of housing units, a datum that is updated annually by the Bureau of the Census. This means a third of this county's population regularly reads the *Sun*.

And though our advertising revenues are not what they were even five years ago, they are improving. You accepted without complaint an increase in the cost from 75 cents to a dollar. Subscriptions, both new and renewals, are up.

Now, about HB 368.

HB 368, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Decker, R-Waddy, and awaiting action in the Senate, would allow local governments and others to remove legal notices from newspapers and place them on government websites. These are things like notices of meetings, proposed ordinances, master commissioner sales, estate filings, utility rate increases; just turn to our classified page and you will see some.

We don't make a ton of money off of these, but this does account for a portion of our revenue. The possible loss of this, now, is a real threat, and we are nearly there. Sadly, many of our colleagues around the state are in even worse shape, where the loss of this revenue would put them out of business.

Though I get and hear the criticisms of the media, the reality is do you really want to live in a country without a free and independent press? Let me be more specific. Should residents of Letcher County have to live without the award-winning *Mountain Eagle*? Or, Georgetown without the *News-Graphic*? Or, Frankfort without the *State Journal*? Or, Versailles and Midway without the *Woodford Sun*?

That said, it's important to also remember there are public policy reasons with roots in the free press provisions of the

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"IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY DELICATE OPERATION."

36 years later, will Pete Rose finally get a chance for the Hall of Fame?

Major League Baseball's spring training season turned into the silly season last week when we learned that Commissioner Rob Manfred is about to be upstaged by President Donald Trump in how Pete Rose's reputation should be remembered.

Manfred likely is seeking redemption for his role in the shameful treatment of Rose, the former Cincinnati Reds' player and manager and the greatest baseball player of all time, in my opinion.

Manfred drove the last stake in Pete's final opportunity for exoneration in 2015 when he denied No. 14's application for reinstatement, a plea for justice that had gone unanswered for 13 years.

In case you're not into big league baseball, here are some of Pete Rose's credentials: 17-time All-Star; baseball's career leader with 4,256 hits; holds the major league record for games played, 3,562, and plate appearances, 15,890. He was the 1973 National League MVP and played on three World Series winners.

The saddest part of this story is that the man nicknamed "Charlie Hustle" died last September at the age of 83. Under baseball's current rules, a player on MLB's ineligible list can never be elected to the Hall of Fame.



Keith Kappes
Columnist
Carter County Times

But the catalyst behind this latest effort more likely was a social media comment last week by President Trump that he plans to issue "a complete PARDON of Pete Rose" in the next several weeks.

Trump noted that Rose had admitted to gambling on baseball but that he had never bet against his team during 1985-89. Rose admitted to being a hardcore sports gambler.

No mention was made of Rose's income tax evasion case from 1990 in which he pleaded guilty and served a five-month prison sentence. In reality, that is the only crime for which Rose would be eligible for a presidential pardon.

In my opinion, Rose was a victim of the gambling paranoia that gripped baseball after the Black Sox scandal of the 1919 World Series. He was treated cruelly and disrespected, despite his great skills as a player.

I also believe that Commissioner Manfred's previously unknown effort to revive the case was leaked to the media in an effort to keep President Trump from getting all or most of the credit for spotlighting the injustice done to Pete Rose.

Keith Kappes can be reached at
keithkappes@gmail.com

Turn off the TV and breathe

As my nine-year-old ran around the soccer pitch this morning, the shouts of the parents were a mixture of Chinese, Spanish, Spanglish, and some standard-issue white guy hollering. The cavalcade of yells for their kids to strike the ball into the net served the same purpose: we're all here to win, to see these boys develop into something better than we are. The world is complicated right now. Trying to climb out of the six-foot grave of the news feels impossible. It's appropriate to sit in the garage, open a Miller Lite, and let the heaviness wash over you, because it usually feels like there's no respite. And that's OK. It's OK to be tired, and wanting something more than gloom is OK. It's felt like a long 2025; we're only in month three. Egg prices aren't coming down, and neither is gas.

It feels like leaving the house costs \$20, and the unemployment rate is climbing faster than the anticipation part of a thrill ride. It's not thrilling.

So, who could blame you if you need an extra minute in the car, staring into the void before you clock into work? Or if the glass of merlot is a little fuller than usual? People on both sides of the aisle are feeling the squeeze of life. Nothing feels normal. We're all in a cocktail shaker—meaner, warier, keeping to our own lane.

The culture wars continue by blaming DEI initiatives as a convenient scapegoat while healthcare costs are still stratospheric. I still owe \$700 for an ER



Robert Dean
Guest Columnist
Carter County Times

visit to monitor my blood pressure. The idea of being "working homeless" is all too close to reality. Only the people down in the ashes can rebuild.

The cigarette breaks feel longer. The videos of puppies playing make the heart feel a little lighter.

We need that.

You're not crazy, and you're not weak. The world is hard right now. The news cycle is relentless; it feels like we're swimming in circles, and life costs more and gives less. I look at my bank account at least three times a day to keep track of what's hit, what I know is coming, and if stopping for snacks will equal an empty gas tank.

Not everything is fixable. There's so much pressure to be informed, have an opinion, and be ready to talk about it. And that's not counting being present for your family, friends, and community. No one can carry all that weight all the time. Everyone's got a cousin or a sibling who has enough drama for two of you. Some days, getting through the day is a win enough, so enjoy that extra-long shower.

24-hour news cycles are meant to exhaust you. They profit from outrage. Panic is their product. The more you rage, the more they profit. You're the one sitting through yet another commercial for a hard-on pill with enough side effects to kill a rhino.

Put your phone on mute. Say "no thanks" to the doom of the television's glare. Not every battle is yours. If you've got that little piece of heaven, grab

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Policies

General

Advertisers should check their ad the first time it runs. The Times shall not be liable for any typographical errors or for failure to publish an ad or errors in publication except to the extent of the cost of the ad for the first insertion. Adjustment for errors is limited to the portion of the ad wherein the error occurred. The Times reserves the right to reject any advertisement and submitted editorial copy, and reserves the right to edit any copy submitted for publication. Corrections will be made at the discretion of the editor.

Circulation

A one-year in-county subscription costs \$26.00 plus tax. Due to additional mailing fees, any subscriptions mailed out of county will cost \$52.00 plus tax.

Letters & Opinion

The Times welcomes all letters to the editor.

Letters should be limited to 300 words or less. Letters should focus on issues that affect the community as a whole, and not personal or business disputes. Letters must include a verifiable address, along with the phone number and signature of the writer. Letters submitted via e-mail need only include a phone number in lieu of a signature.

Letters, columns and cartoons do not necessarily reflect the views of the Times or EK Newsgroup, LLC.

General interest guest columns are welcome. For details email editor@cartercountytimes.com.

Deadlines

The deadline for news copy and letters to the editor is noon on Monday prior to publication. The deadline for display and classified advertising is 5 p.m. on Monday prior to publication.