

Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Creating The Local Journalism Task Force

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SPRINGFIELD - Governor JB Pritzker signed into law Senate Bill 134, which creates the Local Journalism Task Force. The Task Force will conduct a comprehensive study of the status of journalism and make recommendations for improvement to the Governor and General Assembly.

“Many communities across our country have become news deserts – through this legislation, Illinois is taking a step toward addressing that challenge,” said Governor JB

Pritzker. “Robust local journalism is vitally important and I look forward to reviewing the recommendations from the Task Force as we seek to maintain and grow a strong press corps in Illinois.”

“I’ve dedicated years of my life to journalism, so I understand the importance of having access to local news,” said State Senator Steve Stadelman (D-Rockford). “People deserve to know what’s going on in their community, regardless of where they live.”

“Many of the residents of the state are deprived of comprehensive local news coverage,” said State Rep. Dave Vella (D-Rockford). “Local news coverage provides a shared sense of community and a vital check on local government. SB134 creates a task force that seeks to find out what can be done to save it.

Senate Bill 134 creates the Local Journalism Task Force, which will:

- conduct a comprehensive study relative to communities underserved by local journalism in Illinois,
- review all aspects of local journalism including, but not limited to, the adequacy of press coverage of communities, print and digital business models for media outlets, the impact of social media on local news, strategies to improve local news access, and public policy solutions to improve the sustainability of local press business models and private and nonprofit solutions, and
- submit findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2023.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity will be required to provide administrative and other support to the Task Force. The Task Force is also required to meet a minimum of five times.

The membership of the Task Force will consist of the following 15 members:

- one member of each chamber appointed by the caucus leader,
- one member appointed by the Governor,
- one representative of the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications at Northwestern University,
- one representative of the Public Affairs Reporting Program at the University of Illinois at Springfield,
- one representative of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,
- one representative of the School of Journalism at SIU-C,
- one representative of the Illinois Press Association,
- one representative of the Illinois Broadcasters Association,
- one representative of the Illinois Legislative Correspondents Association,

- one representative of the Illinois News Broadcasters Association,
- one representative of the Illinois Public Broadcasting Council, and
- one representative of the Illinois Municipal League.

SB 134 is effective January 1, 2022.