

>> Opinion

The Kentucky Standard

How much?

How much does it cost to buy a country's president? And the total financial records of all its inhabitants? Well, about \$250 million, more or less, it seems. That is around the amount that Elon Musk spent to help elect Donald Trump. In return, Trump has handed over the fate of the U.S. government to him, quite literally.



MARGIE BRADFORD

thousands of people in non-profits that work with it to save lives and foster good will for the United States abroad. Many of those native workers go on to become leaders in their country, and who have friendly feelings for the United States as a result, creating good will for us abroad.

It is an agency which First Lady Melania Trump visited and praised during an international trip in the first Trump presidency. (USA Today 2-7-25)

All 10,000 employees have been put on leave, and those in foreign countries have been told to return home within 30 days. This is an agency created and funded by Congress.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, said, "The irony of the richest man on earth single-handedly destroying an agency designed to help the world's poor, so that the federal budget has room for another giant tax cut for the richest man in the world and his pals, should not be lost on anyone." (In fact, there are 8 billionaires that have been appointed to influential positions in the Trump administration. Evidently having a lot of money gives you expertise in just about anything, regardless of your experience.)

John Thune, the elected Leader of the Senate, said he did not think Musk was shutting down the agency. Tell that to the people who just were served papers. Thune obviously lost his powers of observation along with his ... well, you know.

The previous Senate Leader, Mitch McConnell, who only takes his scruples out at special occasions, bears much responsibility for the emasculation of Congress by putting his finger on the judicial process in the appointment of toadies to the Supreme Court who sometimes seem to be more interested in promoting a political agenda than in protecting the Constitution.

Trump, who seems to think that he was elected emperor, seems to be determined to

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Passage of HB 368 will harm communities and newspapers

Every county in Kentucky has one local business that has been there longer than any other, most more than a century — while some are even closing in on two centuries.



JANE ASHLEY PACE

In many of these counties, that business is the local newspaper. I manage two of those local newspapers. The Oldham Era which is looking forward to celebrating our 150th anniversary next year. The Henry County Local has been publishing 168 proud years and counting. I also assist regionally with 13 other area newspapers with similar tenures.

Newspapers are the heartbeat of every community in Kentucky. We exist to inform, to raise awareness, to build community, to be the voice of those that can't always speak for themselves, to cover local government and hold local officials accountable, to help local businesses grow, to enact change, to celebrate achievements and to archive our community's history.

Our founding fathers felt so strongly about the importance of newspapers and the role we play in communities that we are the only profession explicitly named in the Constitution of the United States of America.

There are three ways in which newspapers have effectively carried out some of our most important roles — covering local government, keeping officials accountable, keeping citizens informed and helping transparency exist: public notices, open meetings and open records.

Without these three in place, knowing how your tax dollars are being spent, what bids are available and being rewarded, what decisions your elected officials are making for you, when meetings are being held

and what new ordinances are being considered would not be as easily accessible.

There are currently two bills, HB368 and SB218, that seeks to remove legal notices from newspapers and place them on government websites. Websites that are run by the

government themselves. What could go possibly go wrong with that?

When a legal ad is placed in a newspaper, it is placed in the local newspaper, dated and cannot be changed after the fact. In addition, it is placed on a website managed by the Kentucky Press Association where all legal notices in Kentucky can be found easily — kypublicnotices.com.

HB368 and SB218 seek to have entities including county and city governments place public notices on their own websites. Yet many have only one employee, if any, and can't even keep their current websites updated. I found one city website in my area that hadn't been updated with meetings or ordinances since 2020. Two others had very little information, none of the council members listed were current and the monthly meeting time was wrong.

Officials have said they would create their own statewide website for all notices. I would argue they are going to spend a lot more money creating a website we already have created and maintained successfully. Right now, paid legal notices are a very small part of county and city budgets — only 0.16%.

So why change? Is this what is really best for the community?

In counties of 80,000 or more a bill was passed in Kentucky to change the rules of public notices due to the cost of the larger newspapers. Yet, many of those counties, including Boone, Campbell, Fayette, Kenton, Madison and

Warren, have decided that newspapers are still the best way to get their notices out and have continued to place them in newspapers despite the change.

Regardless of the county size, public notices should be posted by a third party, and with a newspaper in almost every county (and statewide website already in place) it just makes good, common sense.

Besides the concerns I've already addressed, while legal notices are not the only revenue that keep newspapers going — it is a part of it, and some smaller, rural counties could lose their local newspaper if this bill is passed.

A community without a local newspaper is a community without a heartbeat, and countless studies have shown in news desserts across this country that there will be negative, long-term effects for the community.

No, it is not the job of the legislature to keep newspapers running but why are they so against doing something that maintains transparency and at the same time, would hurt some of the oldest local businesses in this state?

I'm not blind to the criticism of the media.

I was trained that a journalist is to cover the facts and to try and keep any biases out. I think your local newspapers do a pretty darn good job at still doing that. We have editorial pages that are open for opinions to be shared and topics to be discussed but they are clearly labeled and kept separate from the news content.

Your local newspaper employees are not pushing an agenda. We are actively involved and serving in our communities. We live, work, play and volunteer right alongside our community members. We take our role very seriously and that includes publishing public notices.

Any bill that seeks to change how public notices are handled or diminishes public meetings or public records, is going to be harmful to the community, and your local newspaper, in the long run. I urge you to stand up with your local newspaper and help us keep these three in place.

Jane Ashley Pace, a Campbellsville native, is publisher of the Oldham Era and Henry County Local, a regional advertising manager for Paxton Media and the 2024 president of the Kentucky Press Association.

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The Opinion page of The Kentucky Standard is the space reserved apart from the news for both the newspaper and others to express their opinions.

These take several forms.

- **Editorial** — Unsigned editorials represent the consensus of The Kentucky Standard's editorial board. Editorials from other newspapers represent those editorial boards.
- **Viewpoints** — Columns in the Viewpoints section are written generally by regular, volunteer contributors and the opinions expressed are their own. The Standard does not discriminate against columns based on political or ideological grounds.
- **Letters** — Readers' views and letters of thanks are written by readers and submitted per our guidelines.
- **Cartoons** — Cartoons are distributed through a syndication service that offers a limited selection from cartoonists and meant normally as a satirical look on current events. They represent the views of the cartoonist.

The Kentucky Standard

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