



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Rep. Kitchens' newspaper bill signed into law

MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) is honored that his bill that benefits the Washington Island Observer and other newspapers across the state has been signed into law.

Under current state statutes, a newspaper is defined – with certain exceptions – as a publication that is printed at regular intervals and at least once per week, containing, on average, 25 percent news content per issue. A newspaper must meet that definition to be considered eligible to receive payments for publishing legal notices.

The Observer is the only newspaper that is printed directly on Washington Island, but it falls short of the 52-week requirement because it publishes fewer issues in the winter when some residents and visitors leave for the season. Rep. Kitchens' legislation incorporates the Observer into the state definition of a newspaper, thereby allowing the local news outlet to collect payments for printing legal notices.

“I am pleased that my bill will help the Washington Island Observer promote government transparency by ensuring the community has easier and more regular access to legal notices,” Rep. Kitchens said. “In this day and age when local newspapers are constantly folding or shedding staff to stay financially viable, my bill will also assist the Observer with bringing in more revenue, which will end up giving them more opportunities to keep our residents informed.”

In addition, Rep. Kitchens' bill aims to help all other newspapers in the state by modernizing the process for sending affidavits to those who purchase legal notices. Under current law, an affidavit must include a printed copy of the legal notice clipped from the newspaper and must specify the date of each insertion and the paper in which it was published. Rep. Kitchens' bill embraces newer technological advancements by authorizing newspapers to send out the affidavits in either hard copy or electronic form.

“Now that we have the technology available, we shouldn't be putting up roadblocks and forcing newspapers to do something that is, by and large, more costly and cumbersome,” Rep. Kitchens said. “I am proud that my bill will allow newspapers to choose whichever option works best for them.”

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