

February 16, 2022

Representative Chad Perkins
MO House of Representatives
201 West Capitol Avenue
Room 115-C
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Re: The Uniform Public Expression and Protection Act

VIA EMAIL

Dear Rep. Perkins,

The News Media Alliance and undersigned organizations represent thousands of news organizations across the United States and globally, including dozens in the state of Missouri. We are writing to express our excitement and support regarding your recent introduction of HB 2624, the Uniform Public Expression and Protection Act (UPEPA).

The proliferation of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) threaten the role of a free and independent press. Fair and accurate reporting can be punished by well-funded entities who weaponize the judicial system by suing news publishers for exercising their First Amendment rights. These lawsuits are particularly harmful to small and local publications who lack the resources to incur costly legal expenses. Anti-SLAPP laws protect news publishers by giving them an early motion to dismiss these harmful and frivolous lawsuits.

By passing UPEPA, the Missouri legislature will be protecting news publishers and private citizens from predatory lawsuits that seek to punish First Amendment activity. When something as fragile as First Amendment rights are at play, there must be strong protections put in place. UPEPA brings the necessary accountability and consistency to anti-SLAPP laws and will effectively protect these pivotal First Amendment rights.

We thank you for your efforts in protecting the First Amendment rights of Missouri citizens. We look forward to working with you and your staff as UPEPA moves forward.

Respectfully,

News Media Alliance
News Leaders Association

Radio Digital Television News
Association