

Mississippi House passes fetal heartbeat abortion bill

Associated Press

Mississippi lawmakers continue to push ahead with a proposal that could become one of the strictest abortion laws in the nation.

The House on Monday, March 11, amended and passed Senate Bill 2116, which would ban most abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, about six weeks into pregnancy. The House and Senate must work out differences in their respective bills before it moves for-

ward to Gov. Phil Bryant.

Similar bills are being considered in other states. Conservatives want to push an abortion case to the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge the court's 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

Mississippi enacted a 15-week abortion ban last year, and a federal judge declared the law unconstitutional. The state has appealed that ruling.

Bryant has said he would sign the new bill into law.

Mississippi man accused of stealing Mardi Gras parade float

Associated Press

A Mississippi man stole a Mardi Gras parade float two days before it was to roll in a New Orleans suburb, authorities said.

In a news release, the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office said it obtained a warrant Friday, March 8, to arrest Orlando Lyons, 49, of Biloxi on a felony theft charge.

"Lyons claims he rented/bought the float, but he has yet to meet with detectives or provide any evidence to support his claims," according to the news release.

It was not clear if Lyons has an attorney who could comment, and directory assistance does not have a listing for him.

Capt. Scott Lee emailed an electronic poster headlined "Wanted: Carnival Float Theft" with Lyons' name, birthdate and photo.

The 25-foot-long (7.6-meter-long) float was among several stored at the

Covington Lions Club. The Lions Club held its 60th Mardi Gras parade Tuesday.

The group reported the theft Monday, and the sheriff's office asked its Facebook followers, "Have you seen this float?"

The accompanying photograph showed a low rectangular "hay-wagon-style" float with a design of giant green masks and a box at the top emblazoned with a coat of arms and the word "Officers."

A relative of Lyons called that day to say Lyons had asked for help with the float, and it was at the relative's house in nearby Slidell, Friday's news release said. It said Lyons had taken it Sunday evening, planning to tow it to Biloxi, but his vehicle broke down.

Detectives have been talking by telephone with Lyons, asking him to meet with them, the sheriff's office said.

Loss of local news hinders ability to watchdog government

Associated Press

One of the last investigations Jim Boren oversaw before he retired as executive editor of The Fresno Bee was a four-month examination of substandard housing in the city at the heart of California's Central Valley.

The multimedia project revealed the living conditions imposed on many of the city's low-income renters, many of them immigrants: apartments filled with mold, mice and cockroaches, to name some of the more glaring problems. Local housing advocates compared it to the tainted water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

The investigation got immediate results.

"We made people's lives better. We changed laws," said Boren, who retired in 2017 and is now director of the Institute for Media and Public Trust at Fresno State University.

Among other things, the

city responded by requiring property owners to make repairs when it found violations, rather than just levy fines.

"Those are the kinds of things that journalists do," Boren said.

It's the kind of journalism — holding local government officials accountable for problems that affect the lives of real people — that is in danger of being lost in many communities around the country.

Newspapers are closing or being consolidated at an astounding rate, often leaving behind what researchers label as news deserts — towns and even entire counties that have no consistent local media coverage.

According to an Associated Press analysis of data compiled by the University of North Carolina, more than 1,400 towns and cities in the U.S. have lost a newspaper over the past 15 years. Many

of those are in rural and lower-income areas, often with an aging population.

The loss of a reliable local news source has many consequences for the community. One of them is the inability to watchdog the actions of government agencies and elected officials.

Newspapers typically have played the lead role in their communities in holding local officials accountable. That includes filing requests to get public records that shine a light on government action — or inaction — or even filing lawsuits to promote transparency.

"Strong newspapers have been good for democracy, and both educators and informers of a citizenry and its governing officials. They have been problem-solvers," said Penelope Muse Abernathy, a University of North Carolina professor who studies news industry trends and oversaw the "news desert" report released last fall.

"That is what you are missing when you don't have someone covering you and bringing transparency or sunlight onto government decisions and giving people a say in how those government decisions are made."

The absence of a local newspaper playing a watchdog role also can translate into real costs to a community and its taxpayers.

Researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Notre Dame found that municipal borrowing costs increase after a newspaper ceases publication. They found the increase had nothing to do

with the economy. Rather, the demise of a paper leaves readers in the dark and emboldens elected officials to sign off on higher wages, larger payrolls and ballooning budget deficits, their study found.

"Our evidence suggests that a local government is more likely to engage in wasteful spending when there is no local newspaper to report on that government," said University of Illinois

Chicago's Dermot Murphy, one of the study's authors. "Investors find it riskier to lend money to wasteful governments, and thus the costs of financing public infrastructure projects, such as schools, hospitals, and roadways, for a local government are higher."

Stanford University's James Hamilton applies a wider lens to the problem of newspaper closures, examining the benefits that come with investigative journalism — and what is lost when it disappears.

In his book "Democracy's Detective," he examined several case studies of newspaper investigations, including police shootings of civilians, and found that each dollar spent by the news organization generated hundreds of dollars in benefits to society.

"When investigative scrutiny declines, stories go untold, which means waste, fraud, and abuse will be less likely to be discovered," said Hamilton, director of the Stanford Journalism Program. "News outlets will still have stories about a bad doctor, identified through court cases or patient complaints. The story about a bad hospital, which would require more resources and analysis to document, will be less likely to be told."



Penelope Muse Abernathy, a University of North Carolina professor, stands with the daily newspaper selection in the Park Library at the School of Journalism in Chapel Hill, N.C., on Thursday, March 7, 2019. "Strong newspapers have been good for democracy, and both educators and informers of a citizenry and its governing officials. They have been problem-solvers," said Abernathy, who studies news industry trends and oversaw the "news desert" report released the previous fall.

(AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

The residue from pesticides that leak from unrinsed, discarded containers has the potential to cause significant damage to our environment. Therefore, containers should be rinsed immediately after use. If left in the container to dry, the residue becomes more difficult to remove. So, make it a little easier on yourself and go ahead and rinse it out right after you use it.

Since these containers have contained a commercial, hazardous material, it is illegal to dispose of them in landfills, recycling bins or incinerators. The only acceptable place to take them for disposal is to a hazardous waste facility. While this can be costly and time consuming, there

is another option.

The most commonly used method is triple rinsing. When emptying a liquid pesticide from its container, wait until the flow reduces to drops. Continue draining for a minimum of 30 minutes after the drops start. Add the correct amount of water according to the size of the container: containers up to 5 gallons require an amount equal to at least one quarter of its volume; 30- to 55-gallon containers require a minimum of 5 gallons of water. Once water is added, secure the lid on the container and vigorously shake smaller container. Larger containers should be rolled or tumbled in such a manner as to rinse all interior surfaces. Remove the lid and drain into spray

tank. Continue draining for 30 seconds after drops start. Repeat this rinse process two more times. Replace lid and dispose of container.

Pressure rinsing takes less time but requires the purchase of a special nozzle. This rinsing method can be done as the pesticide is emptied into the spray tank. The special nozzle attaches to a garden hose and is used to puncture plastic and metal containers. Insert pressure nozzle by puncturing lower side of container. The nozzle produces a forceful spray inside the empty container and should be rotated to ensure that all interior surfaces are properly rinsed. Rinse for length of time recommended by the manufacturer — usually 30 seconds. Container lid should be rinsed separately and placed back onto the container for disposal.

If properly prepared before disposal, the containers are then considered to

be non-hazardous by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Proper preparation includes either triple rinsing or pressure rinsing. Laboratory studies concluded that these methods resulted in less than 1 part per million of residual in the water from the container after cleaning. This is a safe level in which to dispose of the containers using traditional disposal methods.

Proper rinsing is easy, saves money and reduces the risk of environmental contamination. As always, check with your local recycling center for regulations governing your area.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi, a non-profit, conservation organization founded to conserve, restore and enhance fish, wildlife and plant resources throughout Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.

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Corn	Sep 19	2019 Aug	3.78	-0.11	3.67 -0.02
Soybeans Sldon	Nov 19	2019 Aug-Sep	9.26	-0.48	8.78 -0.05
Soybeans G'wood	May 19	2019 Mar - Deferred Pricing only	8.90	-0.46	8.44 -0.06
Soybeans G'wood	Nov 19	2019 Aug-Sep	9.26	-0.32	8.94 -0.05
Soybeans Minter City	Nov 19	2019 Aug-Sep	9.26	-0.38	8.88 -0.05
Rice	May 19		10.715		-0.105
Rice	Sep 19		10.780		-0.100
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