

WORTH PURSUING? AN ANALYSIS INTO THE RELEVANCE OF THE  
NEWSPAPER ENDORSEMENT

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A Project  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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Master of Arts

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by  
SARAH KELLOGG  
Mark Horvit, Project Supervisor

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

If I could have extended my undergraduate career in journalism further, I would have. While I came into college knowing I wanted to study journalism and I graduated a semester later than I initially planned, there were courses that I still wanted to take and things I still wanted to learn before beginning my first job in a newsroom somewhere in the world. While I could provide a long list as to what else I wanted to learn, I think my biggest regret of my undergraduate career is that I did not do enough political reporting.

My first time covering an election was when I was a freshman at The University of Missouri and I was reporting for KCOU, the student-run radio station on campus. Very nervous 19-year-old me went to a watch party for two state representatives. I was absolutely terrified and stumbled over my first live spots where the station called me for an update. However, I improved as the night went on, at the end of the party, I interviewed both candidates, passing the phone between myself and the winner as I asked my questions, and they answered them. After that night, and after I officially began reporting for KBIA, the NPR station in Mid-Missouri, my interest in politics remained. At KBIA, I covered two more election nights and loved the exhilaration I felt at a watch party. I interviewed attendees and candidates, live tweeted events and at the end of the day, got to assemble it all to a piece for listeners to hear the next day. While I loved election nights, no matter how late I stayed up, I knew that elections were only a small piece of all there is to cover with politics. While I would not switch out any of the classes I took at the Missouri School of Journalism, I wanted more time to take an actual course on political

reporting. Wanting this extension of time, I applied to graduate school with the full intent of using at least some of it to get more experience reporting on politics.

I knew fairly early on that I wanted to do a professional project as opposed to a thesis. While I think it is important to study journalism theory, theory was not something I wanted to focus on for an entire semester of graduate school. I also knew if I came here wanting to report more, I needed the experience that a professional project allowed for and required. While I knew a lot of students pursuing a project finished their final semester at an internship either in New York City or Washington D.C., I did not want to leave Columbia. While the opportunity to intern in Washington D.C. was certainly appealing as an aspiring political reporter, there was no guarantee that I would actually get to cover Congress or the White House if I got an internship there. After talking to my then graduate advisor, now chair of my committee Mark Horvit, I determined that I would actually get the experience I enrolled in graduate school for if I stayed in Columbia and worked at the Missouri statehouse as a political reporter for KBIA. After pitching the idea to Ryan Famuliner, the News Director for KBIA, the internship aspect of my project was determined.

What proved to be more difficult was deciding on a topic to explore for my analysis. Due to the necessity of writing a literature review for Mass Media Seminar, I began thinking about the 2016 election and why media outlets were still largely talking about it a few months into 2017. It led me to read an article that talked about the number of endorsements Hillary Clinton received over Donald Trump. In addition to just a higher number of endorsements in general, Clinton received the support of papers that traditionally went for the Republican candidate. This article led me to write my literature review on whether or not newspaper endorsements were influential in elections. While it made for an interesting literature review, proving actual

causation would be impossible in the amount of time I had for a project. After talking to my chair, the focus shifted from “Are endorsements influential” to “Do political campaigns even care about the endorsement and its relationship with the press?” With this change, I was ready to begin interviewing.

Between and sometimes during my reporting shifts at the Capitol, I interviewed nine people about the relevancy of the newspaper endorsement: three Missouri lawmakers, three people involved in the media, two professors at The University of Missouri, and a political consultant for mainly republican candidates. Each person gave insightful and different opinions concerning political campaigns and their relationship with the press.

When I look back on this project, I’m most proud of two things: my evolution as a political reporter, and my analysis of a traditional news practice that perhaps has not kept up with how media as a whole as changed. I leave graduate school with a better understanding of not only how to be a better journalist, but also how the relevancy of the press is viewed from my own lens.

## Chapter 2: Field Notes

### Week 1: January 16-19

For the first week of the semester, I spent it at the statehouse becoming acquainted with the building and learning the norms and processes of the legislature. I also sat in on the house and senate, and attended the news conference held by the senate leadership on Thursday. While I gathered audio from the house and senate, I did not use any of the audio or file stories. My plan is to begin filing pieces beginning next week. However, I did find this time valuable because I feel more comfortable with the building.

I currently am in contact with KBIA and we are figuring out how I am going to transfer my stories from the statehouse to KBIA. Most likely, since there is already a Dropbox account for the statehouse, we'll create a folder for KBIA that I can drop stories into. I'm also learning Phill Brooks' audio software and system and most likely will be using it to send out audio stories as well. I will be ironing out the details in the coming weeks. I will be figuring out a way I can connect to the FTP and share my stories with other Missouri public radio stations. I also will begin to regularly contact Marshall Griffin of St. Louis Public Radio to coordinate coverage with him. I briefly met with him this week to talk about it.

As far as my research element, I plan on beginning it next week. My first two tasks are to research and create a list of potential interviewees who would be the subjects of my semi-structured interviews. My second task is to begin drafting the questions I will ask the subjects

that will aid in answering my questions on the value of newspaper endorsements. I will send both lists within a memo once they are completed.

## **Week 2: January 22-26**

After last week of getting acquainted with the statehouse building and learning how things work, I threw myself into my reporting this week and had a ton of fun doing it.

Monday was my first day of reporting and the big story of the day was the governor's budget recommendations. I went to the news conference the governor held and recorded audio for KBIA. While I initially had issues transferring the audio to a computer, I managed (through two computers and flash drive) to transfer both a wrap and a cut and copy about the budget to KBIA.

On Tuesday I attended both a hearing in the morning about a bill concerning revenge porn and an afternoon rally on sex trafficking in the state of Missouri. I wrote web stories for both and did one audio piece on each story for KBIA. Once again, a large part of my time involved waiting on the audio to upload. Phil's computer was not letting me upload audio, so this time I used three computers to upload, record, edit and transfer my audio pieces. I'm hoping to streamline this process to one computer soon. On this particular day, I'm really proud that I was able to do as much as I did. However, I do need to start learning how to pace myself, or I will be burnt out by the end of February.

On Wednesday, I gathered audio from the State of the Judiciary speech that was held in the house. From it, I gathered a couple of story ideas, such as Missouri looking into changing how they do bail. I also attended an appropriations hearing on higher education and wrote a quick cut and copy for KBIA. Finally, on Thursday, I attended an a.m. hearing on a bill that requires a warrant to intercept wireless communication. Since that particular hearing room was

not equipped with microphones, the audio I gathered was not KBIA quality so I just wrote a web story and a reader. However, next time I will simply put my microphone on the witness stand to at least get some audio.

As far as the research element goes, I'm still in the process of drafting lists of contacts and questions. It will be hopefully finished by next week, so I can start emailing potential interviewees immediately. I wanted to complete it this week, but I got overwhelmed with my first week of reporting. I need to learn how to balance my work at the statehouse and my research. I feel like I will achieve this balance better over time. Overall, I really enjoyed my first week of reporting and cannot wait to get started on my enterprise/more investigative pieces.

### **Week 3: January 29-February 2**

Week 3 at the Statehouse led me to cover multiple hearings for KBIA. While the hours were long, I had an amazing time writing and recording for KBIA (and the Missouriian). On Monday, I covered a presentation of the Attorney General Office's budget for the 2019 fiscal year. Initially I reported that the AG's office requested for a decrease of one hundred thousand dollars in their budget. However, once Mark pointed out that 100K less would be a less than one percent cut, I modified my story. This was an important lesson for me because when it comes to stories on budgets, not only do I need to report on the story, I also need to analyze what the change in dollars means for the department. Basically, I need to become a better reporter when it comes to numbers and budgets.

On Tuesday, I attended a public hearing on a bill that would ban abortions after 20 weeks. The hearing took a very long time, which I expected, but I was able to write and record a cut and copy, and a wrap as well as a write a web story about it. While I left the Capitol late that night, I am really pleased with my coverage for that day.

On Wednesday, I covered my first Senate hearing, which was exciting. I learned that the Senate hearing rooms are very small and even though I got there 15 minutes early, I still was not able to find a seat. So, next time, I will be there even earlier. The Senate hearing was on a bill that would allow some universities to charge tuition 10 percent past the inflation rate. After I covered that hearing, I also grabbed one of the senators off of the floor to talk about the proposed bill. It was my first time doing that, so I was excited. I know that eventually the novelty of doing new things at the Capitol will wear off, but for now, it's still very fun. I wrote a wrap and a cut/copy for KBIA on that story in the early afternoon. Later, I attended the appropriation hearing of higher education to hear statements from the UM system and other universities on their budget requests. After the hearing, I wrote a cut/copy for KBIA and a combined web story about both hearings I attended.

On the research side, I have created a preliminary list of possible interviewees for my project. I need to consult with my committee/chair to narrow down my list and possibly get the contact information for some of the consultants/managers I have in mind. I also wrote a draft of an email I can use to contact my interviewees. I am currently in the process of drafting my interview questions, which I will then narrow down and revise.

#### **Week 4: February 5-9**

This past week gave me the opportunity to cover my first Senate story on top of my continued coverage of House and Senate hearings. On Tuesday, I arrived a little later to the Capitol due to my worries about the ice. Thankfully, one of our reporters for KMOX was at the hearing that discussed a bill about medical marijuana and had the audio. I was able to listen to the audio from the hearing and write a wrap, cc and web story for KBIA. However, I took longer than I would have liked to produce this story and because of it, missed out on a senate debate on

an education bill. I was disappointed with my performance that day. One of my goals this semester is to be faster with my reporting so hopefully with practice, I will be more efficient with my time.

On Wednesday, I attended a senate hearing initially to cover a bill that would change some of the procedures surrounding gubernatorial appointments. However, halfway through the hearing, another public radio reporter showed up who was going to report on the same story. So, instead of reporting on that, I collaborated with a Missourian reporter on a story about a proposed bill that will lower the statute of limitation for personal injury lawsuits from five years to three. One thing we worked on was checking the statute of limitations for each state in the US. It gave me the opportunity to learn my way around the statutes of different states. The finished collaborative project was really great work.

Finally, on Thursday, I began my day covering a house hearing on corrections. However, I didn't find bill they discussed big enough for a daily story. When I talked to Mark, he mentioned the Senate had been filibustering since the day before, so I decided to report on that instead. I ran up to the senate and grabbed audio from the filibuster. I only had a few hours to write up my story since I was going to the governor's mansion for the Missouri Press Association lunch and following news conference. I was able to write a cc, a wrap and a web story in that time period. I then attended the governor's news conference and wrote a wrap and cc post conference while keeping an eye on the filibuster in the Senate. Overall, I was really happy with Thursday's work and my efficiency.

With the research element, I am narrowing down my list of potential interviewees and plan on sending out interview requests on Monday.

## **Week 5-6: February 12-23**

Firstly, I need to apologize for the delay in these memos. The work at the statehouse is very encompassing and the need to update my chair and the rest of my committee slipped my mind since I see Mark every day and he already knows what I am doing on a day to day basis. I will be sending an additional memo later today that details what I did last week and this week. I should be all caught up at this point and will not fall behind on my memos again.

The beginning of week five had me in a Senate hearing in the morning covering two bills that I thought were interesting. The first bill would make it a felony of second degree manslaughter if anyone urged someone to commit suicide through cyberbullying. Senator Nasheed, the sponsor of the bill cited the Michelle Carter case and one in Missouri as the reasons why she drafted the bill. The other bill creates an online database for rape kits that are collected in the state of Missouri. After interviewing the bill's sponsor after the hearing to clarify her thoughts on the bill's next step, I wrote two scripts and a web story for the suicide bill and one script and a web story for the rape kit story. I was happy with my work this day because I was able to pull two stories from one hearing.

Tuesday of that week was a long one. I sat in on the house that afternoon and grabbed audio for KMOX on a story they wanted about one of the house members. After spending time in the house, I then went to a 5pm house hearing about a bill that would require schools that teach sex education to have units on sexual harassment, assault and consent. The hearing lasted until around 8pm. I wrote two scripts about the bill and produced the audio for them, but ultimately used a Missourian reporter's web story because it made the most sense to collaborate as opposed to me writing a completely brand-new web story.

On Wednesday, I attended another Senate hearing. The bill I came to hear about was one that limited the governor's appointment powers. The committee debated the bill for nearly twenty minutes before they ultimately passed it. I wrote scripts, voiced one of them and wrote the usual web story. It was a fairly quick turnaround for me that day.

My Thursdays are always complicated because if I don't report on something early enough, I can't file anything at all because I need to leave the capitol by one. This particular morning, I went to the house budget committee to hear presentations from the judiciary and the public defenders office. If I was not getting a day turn, I thought I could at least gather information for a potential feature. While I was able to gather audio from the judiciary presentation, my Marantz froze at the end of the public defender recording and I lost all of my audio. Fortunately, a Missourian reporter recorded the session and the audio was good enough to use. I ended up writing one script and a web piece.

I did not work on my research element too much this particular week. Finally, Ryan sent out an email to the Missouri Public Radio listserv announcing that I would begin to share stories as early as next week.

My week six began rather slowly. I had a 24-hour bug on Friday and I was still sick going into Monday. Since I knew running around the Statehouse would not be great for my health, I decided to stay home that day. That turned out to be the best decision, as I was feeling much better the next day.

On Tuesday, I gathered audio from a hearing concerning payday loans. I am considering doing a piece on payday loan institutions and the military and wanted to make sure I got the audio. I then went to the house chambers to see if they would pass anything of particular significance. On that particular day, they passed a bill that would criminalize revenge porn in the

state of Missouri. I knew I wanted to write about this bill. I also contacted Marshall Griffin of St. Louis Public Radio who said they were interested in me sharing what I wrote with them. The only issue I had that week was that Mark was out of the country so I did not have an editor. I asked Marshall if his editor was willing to edit my piece and thankfully he was. I quickly wrote my scripts and got my cuts prepared. I then talked to Fred Ehrlich at St. Louis Public Radio and we edited my pieces. I put all of my files in the KBIA Box and then I sent out my first pieces to the Missouri Public Radio listerv and dropped my audio into the FTP. This was extremely exciting because my work now could be broadcast across the state.

My Wednesday was arguably busier than my Tuesday, but thankfully Dylan was in the newsroom to act as my editor as Mark was still out of town. I wrote scripts, web stories and produced audio about two different bills I heard in a Senate committee hearing early in the morning. One bill would give unpaid leave to employees in situations related to domestic abuse. Another bill requires some individuals to work in order to qualify for Medicaid. I thought both bills were extremely interesting and could really impact Missouri residents. In addition to sharing it to KBIA, I also sent it to the FTP as well. While I covered a lot of material and cranked out a lot of copy, I was finished at a fairly early time and was able to leave the capitol before 5pm, which is very rare for me.

Once again, the small amount of time I have on Thursday made it difficult for me to accomplish much. I sat in on the house, but they did not do anything in time for me to file anything so I went home. Of course, the governor's indictment broke late on Thursday and by that time I was in Columbia. However, I was prepared to drive back if KBIA needed me.

As far as my research element goes, I more or less finalized my list and began emailing potential interviewees. This week I contacted the editorial editor of the St. Louis Post Dispatch

Tod Robberson, sent out an inquiry to Charles Westmoreland from the Columbia Tribune to get in contact with Hank Waters III, and to Steve Booher from St. Joseph News Press since they do not list anyone in their editorial bylines. I received a yes from the Post Dispatch that week.

The absolute best part of my week was finally connecting to the FTP and listserv and sending out my pieces all over the state of Missouri. So far, I'm fairly proud of all of the work I've been doing at the statehouse and I've loved hearing from friends and family that have said they've heard me on the radio.

### **Week 7-8: February 26-March 9**

This memo is the last of the "catch up" memo's I've had to do to make sure I'm keeping everyone updated. They will once again be weekly starting next week. Again, I apologize for the delay in sending them out.

These particular two weeks were fairly hectic in both my day to day reporting and my research.

On Monday of week 7, I was prepared to both cover and not cover the governor's indictment. While it is clearly a national news story, I also knew St. Louis Public Radio was going to be all over it in terms of coverage. While I would have liked to have covered the governor story, I knew it was more important that I cover something else so that more issues are brought to the attention of Missouri residents. With that in mind, I attended a house general laws hearing at noon that day because they were holding public hearings on at least six pieces of legislation concerning guns. The hearing lasted for four hours when the committee members had to go to the house chamber. They then came back around 6:30 for about another two hours. I wrote two scripts, produced the audio for them and wrote a web story. I also posted these pieces to the listserv as I thought they were important enough for the entire state to hear. Mark also told

me that the committee planned on meeting tomorrow to vote on the bills in executive session, so I knew what my assignment for the next day was.

On Tuesday, I got in around noon and went to the General Laws committee meeting that began at 5pm. Once again, the meeting was long. While executive sessions normally do not last as long as public hearings, each democrat spoke out against bills that would expand gun rights and offered amendments to the bills as well. In addition to voting on the previous bills, the committee also held a public hearing on a bill that would stop those convicted of domestic violence to obtain firearms. In addition to writing scripts, producing audio and writing a web story on those bills, I also wrote a separate story for the bill that had the public hearing.

On Wednesday, I went to a hearing in the morning about a bill that would ban the selling or display of the confederate flag or of other confederate monuments. Unfortunately, the discussion over the bill was not very interesting and I did not think I had enough audio or material to write a story. However, I had just put in two 11 hour days at the Capitol, so I wasn't incredibly disappointed that I did not file anything that day.

On Thursday I was unable to file anything in the morning before I left at 1pm that afternoon for my assistantship.

As far as my research element, I emailed and in one case tweeted at a large number of people I hope to interview for my project. I received yeses from Hank Waters III from the Columbia Tribune and from Steve Booher from the St. Joseph News Press. I did not receive a reply from the lawmakers and professors I contacted this particular week.

Week 8 was busier than week 7 in terms of coverage. I wrote and produced pieces for three out of the four days and also spent the time not working on stories contacting potential interviewees and setting up appointments.

On Monday, I attended an afternoon hearing on a bill that would require phone retailers to develop software that blocks pornography. The bill is intended to curb human trafficking. I wrote two scripts, voiced and edited the audio pieces and wrote a web story on the piece.

On Tuesday, I did not have anything scheduled when I arrived at the newsroom. I decided to sit in on the senate and just see what bills came up for debate. Two bills the senate discussed were interesting. One bill would allow for video gambling machines to be located wherever liquor is sold. Another bill pilots an industrial hemp growing program. I decided to keep tabs on the gambling bill and wrote scripts/produced audio for the hemp bill for that particular day. I worked with a Missourian reporter and together we wrote the web story for the bill.

My Wednesday was similar to my Tuesday in that I did not have anything on my agenda heading into the newsroom that day. I decided to sit in the senate again at 2, but after four and a half hours of nothing, Mark gave me the go ahead to go home.

On Thursday, I sat in the house to see if they would pass any bills that were “controversial.” They did eventually pass a bill that would make asbestos lawsuits tougher to go to court. It was passed early enough in the day that I was able to write and produce pieces for the radio. Unfortunately, since I had to finish the piece not in Jefferson City, I was unable to post it to the FTP.

Finally, on the research side of things, I again contacted Austin Chambers and Andrew Whalen, two consultants that I would really like to talk to for my project. If I don’t hear back from them after contacting them one more time next week, I will have to find other consultants to talk to.

The news is much happier concerning my other potential interviewees. I have scheduled an interview with Hank Waters and have received yeses from the other two newspaper editors. I will call them on Monday to schedule the interview. After initially receiving two no's from political science professors, I received a yes from James Endersby and have scheduled an interview with communication professor Mitchell McKinney. I will be emailing/calling Endersby on Monday to schedule an interview for hopefully the week of March 19th.

As far as the politicians go, Kip Kendrick sent an email Thursday morning agreeing to be interviewed. I sent back an email with my preferred timeline for the project, but he has not gotten back to me. I plan to visit his office on Monday to make an appointment. I may also just talk to him while the house is in session. Also on Thursday, I talked in person to Pat Conway who agreed to be interviewed and set up an appointment for Tuesday at 2:30. I also talked to Caleb Rowden who said the project sounded interesting and that he would be happy to talk to me next week. He gave me the email of his secretary and asked me to cc him on the email. I did exactly that, but have yet to receive a reply. I plan on visiting his office on Monday to schedule an interview hopefully for that week.

### **Week 9: March 12-16**

This week I worked quite a bit on my project and filed stories from the statehouse. Where I was a little worried before about the research element of my project, after this week I feel more on track and am happy with my overall progress.

On Monday, I arrived at the statehouse without a plan as to what I would be covering that day. It was decided that I would hang out in the Senate to see if they decided to perfect or pass any interesting laws. What the Senate actually did was spend four hours debating a huge tax bill and do nothing else. I kept the audio, but did not file a story.

Tuesday was the longest day I have spent at the Capitol. I went to the 8am House Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee hearing to sit in on a public hearing about an anti-discriminatory policing bill. I found the bill and the testimony in its favor to be compelling enough for a day turn. I wrote up a wrap, cut and copy, and a web story fairly quickly and then got it edited. Later in the day, I attended the 5pm House General Laws Committee meeting where several interesting bills were getting public hearings. I ended up staying for the entire hearing and writing a wrap, cut and copy, and web story. After I got back to the newsroom, I recorded and edited the audio for everything I covered that day.

I attended another 8am hearing on Wednesday. This time, it was a Senate committee hearing a House bill that would change the marriage laws in the state of Missouri. I wrote and produced my spots for that day and then left after I sent everything out to the FTP.

On Thursday, I attended a House hearing to hear about a House committee bill on corrections. While I did not think the bill was a good day turn, Mark thought that Annika and I should collaborate on a feature story concerning hospitals and prisons. I briefly interviewed the sponsor of the bill and got the list of those who testified for this portion of the bill. I'm really excited to work on this story.

As far as my research element, I accomplished a lot this week. I finalized my questions Monday night and had Mark look over them Tuesday morning. I am attaching them along with this memo. On Tuesday, I interviewed Representative Pat Conway in the side area of the House floor. It was an interesting experience because a couple of times our interview had to stop because there was a call for a vote. Other than that odd quirk, the interview went really well. I also interviewed Representative Kip Kendrick on the House floor that day. Kendrick's thoughts

on endorsements and journalism are a little different since Columbia is arguably one of the most well covered smaller towns in the country.

On Wednesday, I interviewed Senator Caleb Rowden. While he was also from Columbia, I appreciated his input and thoughts as he was the only Republican politician I interviewed. Rowden also gave me the contact information for someone who worked on his campaign, so I plan on contacting him immediately and hopefully setting up an interview.

After finishing up my interviews with politicians, I began my interviews with journalists/editors by interviewing Hank Waters III on Friday. Both Kendrick and Rowden mentioned Waters in their interviews, so I was excited to talk to him. Hank was extremely informative and gave me a really great journalistic perspective on my questions. It made me excited to talk to the other editors/journalists I have on my list.

I plan on spending this weekend transcribing my interviews so I can begin to see similarities or differences in thought.

### **Week 10: March 19-23**

This week, the statehouse was on spring break, so I spent this week working on my professional analysis as opposed to my day to day reporting. On Monday, I interviewed James Endersby, a political science professor. On Tuesday, I interviewed Steve Booher of the St. Joseph news press by phone. I conducted another interview by phone on Wednesday and talked to Tod Robberson of the STL Post Dispatch. Finally, on Thursday, I interviewed Mitchell McKinney, a communications professor at MU.

As of right now, I have completed eight interviews I had scheduled. I am hoping to interview the campaign manager Caleb Rowden recommended, but he has yet to answer his phone. I plan on continuing to contact him over spring break. I also would like to talk to state

senator Jill Schupp, who received the STL Post Dispatch's endorsement back in 2014. I would love to talk to Senator Schupp because as of right now, everyone I have interviewed have been white men. I would like to add at least a little diversity to my interviews. I plan on contacting her this Monday and hopefully scheduling an interview when I get back.

Also this week, I fed all of the audio from my interviews into a transcribing website. My next step is to go back and listen to the interviews and fix the transcriptions because they are far from accurate in their current state. I have already finished transcribing two interviews and plan on finishing the other six during spring break.

I also pitched and discussed some enterprise ideas I have for after I get back from break to both Ryan and Mark. I'm excited to work on those.

### **Week 11: March 26-30**

Week 11 marked spring break. While I was not at the Statehouse and instead in New Orleans this past week, I still managed to get some work done on the research side of things.

I finally was able to contact John Ratliff, the campaign advisor that Caleb Rowden gave me the contact information for. I plan on interviewing him the week I get back (so this week.) I also contacted Senator Jill Schupp, but was denied an interview request.

Also during spring break, I transcribed five interviews. I only have one left. However, if I do manage to interview John Ratliff, that will be an additional interview to transcribe. I hope to be finished transcribing everything by the middle of week 12 and will begin compiling and writing my findings.

### **Week 12: April 2-6**

This week marked my return to the statehouse for the second half of the session. While I loved my vacation, I was happy to be back in Jefferson City and to continue my reporting. On

Monday, the session was not meeting due to Easter. I spent my Monday working on my transcriptions instead. On Tuesday, I arrived at the statehouse around noon. After consulting with Marshall Griffin of St. Louis Public Radio, I decided to attend a 5pm House hearing on a Senate bill that would raise the age for juveniles to be charged as adults from 17 to 18. Since I had a long block of time before the hearing, I spend the majority of my day transcribing my research interviews. Finally, after covering the hearing, I wrote a wrap, cut and copy, and a web story with corresponding audio.

On Wednesday, I had an early morning as I covered an 8am Senate hearing on a House bill that would restrict how individuals could use “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families” funding. After writing, producing and sharing my spots, I pulled Representative Mike Revis from the House floor to see if he would be willing to meet with me for a two-way feature length interview for KBIA. He agreed and I set up an interview with his secretary for next week. I’m really excited to interview him and to finally work on a story that is not just a daily. I love daily coverage, but I’m itching to do some long form work.

On Thursday, I spend my entire morning in the Senate since I figured (correctly) that Marshall would be reporting on the house. Sadly, the Senate debated, but did not pass anything while I was there, so I was unable to file anything that day. I may need to use my Thursdays for feature reporting as opposed to daily coverage.

On the research side of things, I transcribed my interview with Tod Robberson on Monday and Tuesday. I conducted my final interview with political consultant John Ratliff on Wednesday afternoon. I transcribed it the second half of the week. As of now, all of my interviews are completed and transcribed. This means that I’m finally ready to write my findings and what my interviewees discussed. I’m both excited and terrified.

Overall, I feel like this week was quite productive. Next week, along with my interview with Mike Revis, I plan on working on even more enterprise stories and covering the impending House report on the governor.

### **Week 13: April 9-13**

I realized that I mislabeled my memo last week, so last week was actually week 12 as opposed to week 11, which makes this week 13. Now that that's been cleared up, it was both a not busy week and a very very busy week in Jefferson City.

On Monday, I interviewed Representative Mike Revis for a feature that I'm working on in his first few months as a newly elected representative. The final feature will be a "two-way" where the audience hears both my questions and Revis' answers. I plan on writing the script for it this weekend so it can be produced and aired early next week. My allergies were intent on making myself miserable, so after my interview, I headed home.

I arrived on Tuesday afternoon planning on sitting in on the Senate to see if they would get anything done. Listed on their formal calendar of House bills to pass, I saw the child marriage bill that has been a big issue during this session. I was hoping that they would discuss and vote on it that day. As it turns out, after about four and a half hours, they did not talk about that bill or any other bill that I found interesting. So sadly, I was unable to file anything that day.

Wednesday was crazy and that's putting it lightly. Since the newsroom knew the House report on the Governor was going to drop that day, everyone was prepared for a news packed evening once the report dropped. Earlier in the day, using the audio from a Missourian reporter, I was able to draft up a quick cut and copy about the House cancelling session for the rest of Wednesday and Thursday and dropping it in the KBIA box. After that, we were waiting for the report to drop at five.

However, at 3:30, Mark got a press release saying Governor Grietens was going to issue a statement to the media at 4:00. I grabbed my equipment and went upstairs and stood outside of the governor's office until I could go inside. While in line, I communicated with the other public radio reporters to see what I should do for this news conference. I ended up not filing any spots, but I did gather audio and live stream the governor's statement via Twitter.

When I returned back down to the newsroom, we had received an embargoed copy of the report ahead of the 5pm release day. After reading as much of it as I could in 15 minutes, Ryan called me from KBIA to do a quick spot on what I had learned so far. I was a little frazzled for this and I know that I need to work on reading and evaluating a report faster if I am ever going to do something like that again. But to be fair to myself, it was the first time I had done something like that, so I can only improve from there. After that, I spent more time reading the report until it was time for the House leadership news conference at 6.

Once again, I didn't file spots since other public radio reporters were in attendance. Instead, I gathered the raw audio and live tweeted the event as much as I could. After the news conference, I interviewed two democratic representatives about their reactions to the report. Ryan wanted me to grab some sound bites from those two interviews and write a small lead in to their quotes so KBIA could use them as a part of their coverage in the morning. After doing that, I was given the go ahead from Mark to go home.

On Thursday, I did not go to the statehouse and worked on writing my project.

On the research side of things, with all of my interviews completed and transcribed, I wrote the first draft of my professional project this week. I am turning in the first draft to Mark on Friday. I also reserved a room for my project defense. I am defending at 3pm on April 24th.

### Chapter 3: Self Evaluation

Before I even began reporting in Jefferson City for the 2018 session, I had a general idea of what I would be covering. I thought it would be a lot of hearings and interviews with lawmakers. I thought I would be observing debates from the press galleries and occasionally pulling aside a lawmaker from the Columbia area to talk about an issue. If I was lucky, maybe I would get to cover a filibuster. Then, on the Wednesday before I was to report to the Capitol, KMOV, a television station in St. Louis alleged that the governor of Missouri blackmailed a woman he had a sexual encounter with in 2015. I knew then, that my semester was not going to be business as usual.

Despite knowing that the session was going to be bonkers, I was incredibly excited to begin reporting in Jefferson City in the spring of 2018, I was also very *very* nervous and had no clue what I was doing. Knowing myself and how I need a little time to figure out what I should be doing at the beginning of any task, I decided to just observe the work of my fellow reporters and learn my way around the building my first week there. This proved to be an effective strategy in that I spent that first week taking in what exactly happens during committee hearings and on the floor of the House or the Senate. Not needing to take notes or report allowed me to really observe my surroundings and know what to expect. Even though I knew I would learn a lot, I underestimated how much better and more efficient of a reporter I would become.

The bulk of my work at the statehouse was daily reporting. Normally the day or night before a shift I would talk to Mark Horvit, the editor and head of the statehouse reporting

program, about what hearings or events looked the most interesting or impactful that day. I grew to be very familiar with both the Missouri Senate's and the Missouri House of Representatives' hearing pages to see what would be worth covering that day. After checking in with the newsroom, I would grab my recording equipment and head to the committee room or the House/Senate press galleries to begin my reporting. Afterward, I would return to the newsrooms and would normally write two scripts for radio and a web story that was normally a combination of both scripts. I would also cut and produce my audio clips that would be broadcast in KBIA's daily newscasts. This almost regular routine helped me learn multiple skills and habits that I think make me a stronger journalist.

One of the biggest skills I can take away from my time at the statehouse is that I am a much faster reporter than I was at the beginning of the session. A lot of times when I'm writing, I spend too much time trying to find the perfect words to explain a situation. While I obviously want my writing to be the very best that it can be, sometimes it is better for me to just write everything up and edit it later. At the beginning of the semester, it would take me too long to write up what should have been a fairly simple story. Occasionally, as you probably read in my field notes, it cost me a story I could have covered the second part of my day. As I wrote more, I developed an ear for what form of writing sounded the best and relayed the most information for the radio. The revelation helped my writing, but even more importantly it helped my speed and allowed me to report on stories quicker, so I could get to the next important thing.

Being at the statehouse nearly every day also helped me learn what was typical and what was not for a hearing or for a debate on the House or Senate floor. Spotting these irregularities, whether it was an above average number of citizens present to testify against a bill or a

lawmaker's reaction or statement regarding a bill, helped me realize rather quickly what the real story was or what made the bill even more important other than just what the legislation says.

The next lesson that I learned while reporting at the statehouse was to have a plan, but absolutely do not marry that plan. I cannot count the number of times I have gone into a hearing, believing it will be the most fascinating thing I've ever heard, and the senators spend two minutes on the bill. Not only that, they'll spend a half hour on the bill that follows it. I've learned how to be flexible and change the focus of the story when necessary. Almost as importantly, I've learned how it is okay to drop a story if nothing is happening. Sometimes my time is better spent covering something else than wasting time trying to make a non-story into something interesting.

One of the oddly harder things for me to learn is that I have a right to be at the Capitol just as much as any of the lawmakers. I am, at my core, a non-confrontational person. I will stick up for myself, but I really would just rather have everyone like me. I admit it is not the best personality trait for a reporter, but it is a trait I have nonetheless. My first interview at the Capitol was a slight disaster as I was very nervous and the lawmaker could have been a little less curt. However, as the weeks went by, I grew more and more comfortable approaching senators and representatives and asking them questions about how their legislation will affect Missourians. I will value my time at the Capitol for many reasons, but I think one of the best things I learned is how to be confident and as long as I know what I'm talking about, I have no reason to be nervous.

Another personal accomplish I gained while reporting during this session is that I developed a better reporting intuition. For me, the absolutely hardest part of reporting is pitching stories. It was difficult for me when I started studying journalism, and it is difficult for me now. As the session wore on and my curiosity piqued on certain topics, these questions I had ended up

being the best pitches for enterprise stories. When I had a large pitch session with my KBIA editor on possible feature ideas, all of them ended up being doable and a couple of them my editor really liked. Not only has this session made me a better daily reporter, but also I'd like to believe it helped me realize what a good political feature can be.

Finally, I have to talk about what I learned about breaking news reporting. This was an unusual time to be a reporter in Jefferson City in that scandals concerning the governor of Missouri, or any state for that matter, are not particularly common. Initially I reported a little on the questions Governor Eric Greitens fielded about his admitted affair during regular news conferences. However, I spent more of my time those days writing about the other issues he talked about, such as the budget. One of the benefits of not being the only public radio reporter in Jefferson City is that I got to stray a little from the governor story because I knew St. Louis Public Radio would be there to cover it. However, there was no way I could avoid covering breaking news the day the House released its partial report on the governor. One of the best lessons I learned that day is that great breaking news coverage is not something that reporters just think of off the top of their heads. This particular piece of breaking news was different in that we knew when the report was coming, we just did not know what was in it. Because of this, the news team was able to come up with a plan on how to cover the news. Our coverage was not reactionary, it was meticulously planned, and because of that I was able to stay fairly calm and collected when the information finally dropped. That being said, one part of the day was "breaking news" in that we were given only a 30-minute heads up before the governor gave a statement to the press. After communicating via Slack, the radio reporters down at the Capitol were quickly assigned roles and I ended up live-streaming the press statement via Twitter. While I would have liked to have maybe done more for the radio, I learned that just because I did not

cover every aspect of that story, does not mean I sat back and did nothing. While I may not have a solo byline, I am really proud of what I accomplished that day.

As I am writing this report up, I have written a total of 31 pieces for radio or on the rare occasion, the *Missourian*, with the craziest weeks of the session still to go and more than a couple of features that I hope to finish by the time session ends. While I may not initially get a political reporting job right out of graduate school, I know I will eventually end up covering the goings on at a statehouse somewhere in the country.

## On-Site Supervisor Evaluation



**School of Journalism**  
University of Missouri

201 Neff Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211-0001

PHONE 573-882-0860  
FAX 573-884-5400  
WEB <http://journalism.missouri.edu>

April 23, 2018

Sarah Kellogg did a fantastic job this semester working for KBIA and other public radio stations in the Missouri state Capitol newsroom.

Sarah had several goals for the semester, including learning how to cover a state legislative body, getting faster and more efficient at covering daily and breaking news, and continuing to build on her ability to identify and pitch potential news stories.

She made great progress in all three areas. After only a few weeks, Sarah was turning multiple stories in a single day, moving from a House hearing in the morning to covering the floor of the Senate in the afternoon seamlessly. With an extraordinary news cycle this spring thanks to controversy and investigations surrounding Missouri's governor, Sarah played an integral role in covering the unfolding story. She was ready and willing to jump on daily breaking news or to pitch in on quick-turn enterprise.

Sarah also proved to be a great collaborator. She worked with Missourian and KOMU-TV reporters, both on covering daily stories and producing podcasts for special reports. She is a generous colleague, and this will serve her well in any newsroom setting.

Sarah has a strong work ethic and is a quick study. Just as importantly, she is a pleasure to work with, never letting the pressure of a breaking news story shake her, and helping to keep the mood in the newsroom light, which can be a great benefit during long days.

I had high expectations for Sarah when she came to the Capitol, and she surpassed them. It has been a pleasure working with her, and she will be missed.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Horvit'.

Mark Horvit  
Director, State Government Reporting Program  
University of Missouri School of Journalism

## Chapter 4: News Clips

**January 22, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-january-23-2018#stream/0>

Governor Eric Greitens unveiled his proposed budget for the 2019 fiscal year Monday afternoon. KBIA's Sarah Kellogg has more on its impact on higher education.

**0122BudgetA**

**TRT: 46**

**SOC**

While Governor Greitens' proposed 2019 budget included an increase in funding for K through twelve education, higher education is facing a potential cut of over ninety-six million dollars.

Compared to last year's appropriations, that is a nine percent cut.

Proposed in the budget is the elimination in funding for all higher education initiatives. This includes the University of Missouri's cooperative medicine program. Greitens commended the universities that worked with the government in an effort to eliminate costs before his recommendations.

**GOVBUD1**

**TRT:15.5**

**"...in savings"**

*We want to thank university leaders, who worked in partnership with us, to find savings. As just one example, President Choi and others did a study with Price, Waterhouse, Cooper, and identified seventy million dollars in savings.*

Despite the cuts, Greitens did propose an increase in funding for higher education scholarships.

Sarah Kellogg, KBIA news.

**January 23, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-january-24-2018#stream/0>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/house-committee-discusses-revenge-porn-bill#stream/0>

The House Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety held a public hearing Tuesday morning on a proposed bill that criminalizes the nonconsensual circulation of private sexual images. A more commonplace term for this is revenge porn.

According to the statements made at the hearing, thirty eight states have similar laws already.

The bill states that a felony is committed when an image that would be reasonably understood as private, is intentionally shared without the knowledge or consent from the other party.

Eight witnesses testified on behalf of the bill. A mom from the St. Louis area expressed her support for the bill and the how cell phones can be used to damage individuals in the context of sharing images.

“With the click of a button, lives can be destroyed, the reach and impact, immeasurable. This type of destructive conduct is on the rise, due in part to the fact that malicious individuals do not fear the consequences of their actions,” she said,.

An amendment to the bill includes the criteria that the image must also be shared with an intent to harass and threaten the victim. This addition would provide protection for reporters who would share such images for a news purpose.

According to the fiscal note on the bill, the Department of Corrections predicts that eight individuals would be convicted of this felony within the first year.

The same bill was proposed last year, but was not passed.

“I think it ran out of steam near the end of the session, just too many bills and not enough time,” Representative Jim Neely, the bill’s sponsor, said.

Neely is optimistic the bill will pass this year.

**January 26, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-january-26-2018#stream/0>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/cell-cite-simulator-devices-bill-requires-warrant-gathering-information#stream/0>

A proposed house bill would require law enforcement officials to obtain a warrant to use any device that intercepts communication from wireless devices. This includes: cell phones, tablets and laptops. Currently, it is against the law to gather wired communication such as landlines without a warrant.

The Special Committee on Homeland Security held a public hearing on the bill Thursday morning.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Keith Frederick, R-Rolla, also sets up parameters as to how wireless communication can be gathered. This includes the requirement to delete data gathered from any party not specified in a warrant.

Rep. Paul Curtman, R-Washington, expressed his support for the bill.

“There’s all kinds of innovation in the military and law enforcement and sometimes that innovation is used to go further than what previously courts, the public or the legislature knew was even available,” Curtman said.

A majority of the discussion was spent on one specific line that provides an exception to the law, if officials receive consent from the “owner or possessor” of the device. The committee recommended removing the word possessor, since it gives a less clear definition of who is authorized to hand over a device.

The same bill was introduced last year and passed the Senate, but was not passed in time before the session ended.

**January 29, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/attorney-generals-office-asks-less-one-percent-cut-budget#stream/0>

While the Attorney General's office is taking on cases to combat human trafficking and is even investigating Google, they are planning on doing that with a slightly smaller budget. The proposed core operating budget for the 2019 fiscal year is \$25,332,059.

The cut Attorney General Josh Hawley recommends is the elimination of two, full time, executive administrative positions: an IT post and one executive assistant. According to Hawley this would equal to about \$100,000. A cut this small would amount to less than one percent of the budget.

Despite asking for a reduction in the operating budget, Hawley emphasized the office's commitment to helping Missouri citizens.

"While our caseload is what we believe to be at an all-time high, we have over thirty-six thousand ongoing litigation matters. We are committed to doing more with less and in keeping with this fiscal discipline, we are asking for less this year," Hawley said. Hawley stated the office asked for decrease in funding the previous year as well.

One aspect of the budget representatives inquired Hawley about was on travel. It currently includes reimbursements for employees who use their own cars to travel to different areas across Missouri for work. Rep. Greg Razer, D-Kansas City, asked Hawley to clarify if that included expenses for Hawley to commute to the Capitol, bringing up the lawsuit against Hawley for not residing in Jefferson City.

"Just to confirm, none of this money is going back to reimburse you for travel from here to Columbia," Razer said.

Hawley confirmed that the budget did not include money for his commute. While Hawley repeatedly stated that the office is committed to doing more with less, Rep. Peter Merideth, D-St. Louis, pointed to a recent sanction held against the attorney general's office for not filing documents on time.

"Are you understaffed? Is there a reason that you're not able to comply with those requests on time?" Merideth asked. Hawley responded that his office has filed a motion to reconsider the sanctions in question and that their attorney in this case has made "all good faith" efforts to comply with the requests of the plaintiff's attorneys.

**January 30, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/proposed-bill-would-ban-abortion-after-20-weeks#stream/0>

A ban on abortions after twenty weeks drew support and criticism on a hearing Tuesday night.

The proposed bill, one of more than bills related to abortion this session, prohibits an abortion after twenty weeks. Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, the bill's sponsor, chose this cutoff period because that is when the fetus can feel pain. Lichtenegger cited Missouri's current laws, stating that performing an abortion after the fetus can feel pain is equivalent to assault.

"The 8th circuit court of appeals has just ruled that an unborn child is a person, so this would obviously mean that, this is a person and we are not to assault them," Lichtenegger said. Rep. Cora Faith Walker, D-Ferguson, questioned Lichtenegger on the bill, stating that legal viability, the current cutoff for abortions under Missouri law, is not about pain.

"What my question is, and maybe you can have someone who can come and testify about whether or not the presence of pain or the ability to feel pain equates to viability because I'm not seeing any sort of research that suggests that," Walker said.

12 witnesses spoke at the hearing about the bill. Six were in favor, six in opposition. Those in favor of the bill included a constitutional attorney who spoke on the legality of the proposed bill, citing other states that already have passed 20-week bans.

Among those who spoke in opposition were two women who received abortions past the 20-week mark due to the health of the fetus. The bill's hearing came just one day after the US Senate failed to pass its own 20-week abortion ban

**January 31, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-february-1-2018>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/higher-education-institutions-campaign-ability-raise-tuition-and-funding#stream/0>

Presidents from multiple universities testified Wednesday morning on behalf of a bill that would change how universities could charge tuition. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, allows universities with an above average tuition rate in the state of Missouri, to raise tuition up to ten percent past the rate of inflation

It modifies the current law which currently caps the tuition rate, in most cases, at the rate of inflation. The bill also removes the appeal process universities must follow if they want to raise tuition past the cap. Now, with a cap of 10% past the inflation rate, universities no longer have to appeal to the state board of higher education, but cannot go past the cap. According to Rowden, the intended purpose of this bill is to provide an option for universities when they are facing budget cuts.

“It is my hope, that this bill is never used, because the idea that, this would only happen in a world where we are cutting core appropriations,” Rowden said.

Nine people spoke to condone the bill, including UM System President Mun Choi. Choi linked the support of this bill to last year’s budget cuts and the proposed budget cuts Gov. Eric Greitens is recommending for higher education this year.

“This tuition increase relief that we are seeking, is really tied in to how much support we are getting from the state. During the past two years we’ve seen an 80 million dollar cut to our appropriations and that’s putting us into a precarious situation,” Choi said. Another supporter was Natalie Butler, who represented the Associated Students of the University of Missouri.

“With the series of cuts in fiscal year 2018 and those proposed in fiscal year 2019, combined with the tuition caps, we’ve really put universities in an unworkable position,” Butler said. Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, expressed his support of the bill, questioning the amount of involvement the government has with tuition rates.

“I think colleges and universities are smart enough to price their services, and if they overprice it, they’ll pay the price,” Brown said. The bill did receive scrutiny. Senator Jason Holsman, D-Kansas City, said he’s hesitant to support the bill without some way to provide tuition predictability for students. Holsman also noted that the governor’s recommendations are subject to the Senate’s decision.

“Until we get our arms around what our Senate position is going to be, I think it’s too early to determine whether the universities need a ten percent increase above the cost of inflation,” Holsman said. Universities were again the topic of discussion during the House Education Appropriation subcommittee. Representatives from six universities spoke to the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Members of the education appropriations subcommittee heard testimony from the heads of multiple universities Wednesday afternoon. Choi was one of six representatives who spoke on behalf of their respective universities.

“We believe very strongly that further cuts will lead to larger class sizes, higher student to faculty ratios and ultimately, lower graduation rates, which essentially increases the cost of attendance for our students,” Choi said. Choi requested the restoration of the UM System core budget, the restoration of line item projects and the committees help in passing a senate bill that would allow universities to change the tuition cap to ten percent beyond the inflation rate. Mike Middleton, the Interim President of Lincoln University, stated that Lincoln university could not sustain more significant cuts.

“A decline in the number available high school students was already forecast, but with this additional wave of cuts, we are in a perfect storm, with no clear break in the clouds.” Middleton said. Two common themes among some of the universities’ statements were the support of raising the tuition cap, and a request to delay performance based funding.

**February 7, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-february-8-2018#stream/0>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/proposed-bill-would-limit-timeframe-personal-injury-lawsuits>

Note: Though KBIA's website gives me the byline, I co-wrote this story with Missouriian reporter Magdaline Duncan

State lawmakers are considering legislation that would shrink the window during which Missourians can file personal injury lawsuits. The current statute of limitations is five years; the proposal would lower that to three. Missouri is one of only seven states that have a statute of limitations for personal injury that is three years or longer; 26 states have a limit of two years. Sen. Dan Hegeman, R-Cosby, the bill's sponsor, wants to bring Missouri more in line with other states. Hegeman stated during a Wednesday committee hearing that most plaintiffs seek damages before the three-year mark anyway. However, when other lawmakers asked, no data was available to provide detail.

"It simply is common sense that most injured persons will use reasonable due diligence to pursue their claim as soon as practicable. Most people want the justice and then are able to move on with their life," Hegeman said. Brian Watson, a lawyer practicing in Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin, spoke on behalf of the bill. He believes shortening the time period that suits can be filed would improve the quality of evidence that is brought forward in cases.

"Witnesses go missing, evidence gets stale, memories fade, and throughout that time the litigants are unable to resolve their cases on the best evidence available," Watson said.

Several senators on the committee support the bill. Sen. Dave Schatz, R-Sullivan, believes it will help businesses.

"What business owners are looking for is certainty. So if we have a problem, we need to address it and take care of it. But lingering on and waiting for that to occur — I think limiting that is probably better than not," Schatz said. Watson brought up another concern, which are lawsuits that may be coming in from other states with shorter statutes of limitations. Potentially, lawsuits that are past the statute in one state, could be filed in Missouri due to its longer timeframe. Sen. Ed Emery, R-Lamar, said that is one of the main reasons to pass the bill.

"As I see it, the main disadvantage to Missouri in having a five-year statute of limitations is that it is different from so many of our neighboring states, most of which have three years, which then pushes people into the Missouri court system because of the differences," Emery said. Sen. Scott Sifton, D-Affton, pushed back on this idea, asking why higher courts would not just dismiss a lawsuit outside of its jurisdiction.

"If they can't establish proper venue, or proper jurisdiction in Missouri, the lawsuit is going to get dismissed, right?" Sifton said. David Klarich spoke in opposition to the bill on behalf of the Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys. He said that a shorter statute of limitations would leave less time for potential out-of-court settlements and could increase the number of cases in courts.

"I would just suggest, senators, that if you are going to lower the statute of limitations, that statistically you are not going to impact a lot of people, but you are going to cause more litigation. I know that's not your intention, but understand, people will preserve their right to court," Klarich said. Klarich also said that the harm in a long statute of limitations doesn't fall on the state, but on the plaintiff, as the evidence will deteriorate and witnesses will become more difficult to access. Sen. Bill Eigel, R-Weldon Spring, said after the hearing that he's undecided on the bill until he receives more information.

"The interesting thing that was said at the meeting is that no one is actually able to identify how many lawsuits have been submitted between three and five years," Eigel said. "So I'm trying to get my head around how big of a problem is this."

**February 8, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/missouri-senate-endures-filibuster-over-utility-laws#stream/0>

A bipartisan group of senators have spent over 18 hours filibustering a bill that rewrites Missouri's utility laws. The hours-long discussion has ranged from Amazon's future headquarters, to Gov. Eric Greitens' proposed tax plan, to Eminem. Regardless of the topic, the goal is the same: to filibuster a bill that some senators state will allow utility companies to raise rates on electricity. Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D- St. Louis stated she could not support such a measure.

"I can't support any increase for my residents at this point because I know how they are struggling," Chappelle-Nadal said. Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, stated the claim this bill would raise rates is false.

"Right now, on average, for the last number of years, utility rates have gone up by an average of six percent. This actually has a cap of three percent in the bill, so you're inevitably cutting the increase in half for the next five to ten years," Rowden said. Debate began late Wednesday afternoon and continued through Thursday. Sen. Rob Schaaf, R-St. Joseph and Chappelle-Nadal discussed the bill Thursday morning, with Schaaf stating the Senate could be debating other bills

"We could be dealing with other important issues, but no, no we've gotta help out Ameren, we gotta help out the company, the monopoly that's going to raise rates on everybody," Schaaf said. If enough senators were not on the floor, a quorum was called which called for senators to return to the floor. A majority of senators apparently are for the bill and would pass it, believing it provides a forward-looking way to update the utility infrastructure. When asked

about the filibuster Thursday afternoon, Gov. Eric Greitens stated that he will wait and see what the final bill looks like, but that he respects Sen. Ed Emery, R-Lamar, the bill's sponsor and supports regulatory reform.

**February 13, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-february-13-2017#stream/0>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/proposed-bill-would-create-database-sexual-assault-kits#stream/0>

Currently, Missouri has no way of keeping track of processed sexual assault collection kits. A proposed bill hopes to fix that. During a hearing Monday afternoon, members of the public spoke in favor of a bill that would create an online system that uploads and stores information on sexual assault kits.

Right now, a survivor of rape would possibly not have the ability to know where that kit is. Sen Jeanie Riddle, R-Mokane, the bill's sponsor, cited Attorney General Josh Hawley's proposed statewide audit to determine just how many rape kits are untested in the state of Missouri.

"Missouri is in the minority of states, that has never done an audit of untested sexual assault evidence kits. Many states require audits, Missouri does not," Riddle said. She stated that this potential system could be used to assist Hawley's investigation. According to Riddle, the Attorney General's office already provides forms for hospitals and law enforcement agencies to use, when filling out a request for reimbursement for these kits. Riddle states that this bill would update that form to a live, updating system. Sen. Scott Sifton, D-Affton, who serves on the committee, commended the bill, stating that it's normally tough to get a straight answer on just how many kits remain untested.

"You kind of don't know who to believe. You talk to one agency, they would say 'We've knocked it out of the park.' You talk to another agency they'll say 'Well, that agency is sitting on a ton of them' and it just, it shouldn't be a lot to ask to process these things," Sifton said. Daniel

Hartman, a supporter of the bill and legislative director of the Attorney General's office, stated that the test rape survivors take is traumatic and invasive, and they should know where that kit is. While Riddle did not address exactly where the funding would come from, she later stated that it is early in the process and the money necessary for the system might be found in the budget.

**February 13, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-february-13-2017#stream/0>

Missouri schools could see a change in its sex education curriculum under proposed legislation.

KBIA's Sarah Kellogg reports.

**0213SEXED**

**TRT: 42**

**SOC**

*The proposed bill would expand Missouri's sex education curriculum to include sexual harassment, sexual assault and consent. The House Children and Families committee heard the bill Tuesday night. Under the proposed legislation, only schools that already provide sex education would be required to change its curriculum. The bill also offers an "opt out" option, if parents do not want children to learn those topics.*

*Representative Holly Rehder (REED-ER), the bill's sponsor stated that this legislation is a collaboration between herself and students of the University of Missouri Rehder talked about her own family's experience with sexual violence and how communication was important.*

**0213REHDER**

**TRT:16**

**"...what had happened"**

*"I think that the common dominator there was that it was always an open discussion in our household. We did not feel that it was our fault, that we had done anything to provoke that. We knew that could come forward and tell what had happened."*

*The bill received moderate support from the committee with at least three lawmakers expressing the need for consent education in schools.*

*Reporting from Jefferson City, Sarah Kellogg, KBIA News.*

**February 14, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/morning-newscast-february-15-2018#stream/0>

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/proposed-bill-would-limit-gubernatorial-appointment-abilities#stream/0>

A bill that would place limitations on the governor's ability to appoint and remove people to state boards is closer to becoming a law.

The Senate Government Reform Committee passed a bill Wednesday morning that would give more power to the Senate when it comes to gubernatorial appointments to state boards and commissions. This bill comes after accusations from lawmakers that Gov. Eric Greitens stacked the board of education in his favor late last year.

Under this legislation, the governor is required to notify the Senate of any appointments when session is not underway. It also bars the governor from rescinding an appointee unless approved by the senate or making any temporary appointments if a vacancy arises when the senate is not in session.

Senators in the committee debated the bill for almost twenty minutes, with a few senators expressing concern on whether or not the bill goes too far. Sen. Caleb Rowden, the chair of the committee, stated he believes the bill represents the Senate standing up for itself.

“This is about fifty years from now, with different personalities and maybe different majorities and different individuals, how we ensure that the separation of powers and the way that our system of government was designed,” Rowden said. Rowden stated during the meeting that the governor's staff is currently “tight-lipped” on their opinions on the bill. Sen. John Rizzo spoke in favor in passing it out of committee, stating that the conversation needed to move to the entire senate.

“The conversation between us in this room doesn’t get the point across of what I would consider possibly being a little disrespected time and time again when it comes to these appointments and waiting for us to leave in May, only to be gamed again,” Rizzo said.

The bill passed with a vote of 5-2, with Senators Ed Emery and Brian Munzlinger voting in opposition. It will next be debated in the entire Senate.

**February 21, 2018**

Link to web: <http://kbia.org/post/mo-senate-committee-considering-work-requirements-medicaid-recipients#stream/0>

Missouri could fall in line with other states hoping to implement work requirements for “able-bodied” Missourians on Medicaid. A Senate Committee held a public forum Wednesday morning on legislation that would require some residents to engage in 20 hours of work, education, job searching or other services per week. The proposed legislation would require the Missouri Department of Social Services to submit a waiver and make the changes necessary to implement the policy.

This year, the Trump administration opened the door to states who want to modify their Medicaid programs. The Federal Department of Health and Human Services released a letter announcing its commitment to assisting state with the changes. Kentucky became the first state to establish such changes, with Indiana also implementing the requirements earlier this month. The bill outlines multiple exceptions to who would not be required to work, including anyone over the age of 64, those who are pregnant and the primary caregivers of a child or adult. Sen. David Sater, R-Cassville, the bill’s sponsor, said Medicaid needs to be reformed or it will overwhelm state and federal budgets.

“At the end of the day, this bill is about introducing personal responsibility into a program that has none of it,” Sater said. Proponents for the bill said that the current welfare system traps those who qualify into dependency on the program.

“Work restores dignity, a sense of independence and brings people back to life, and we think that this is the compassionate way to proceed and to not continue to trap people in a system of dependency, especially people who are able bodied and can work,” Ryan Johnson, a lobbyist

with United for Missouri, said. Sen. Jill Schupp, D-St. Louis County, spoke against the bill, saying there are many circumstances as to why someone would be on Medicaid.

“I’m really concerned that we are putting people’s health in additional jeopardy, that that’s our goal because we think people are being irresponsible and lazy,” Schupp said.

Opponents of the bill also had concerns about how the new policy might conflict with current requirements for Medicaid. According to Sidney Watson, a professor at law at St Louis University who testified against the bill, a family of three is not currently qualified for Medicaid if they earn over \$386 a month. A person working at minimum wage for the 20 hours a week necessary to qualify for Medicaid under the new policy would then make too much money to qualify for Medicaid. Watson also said that the implementation of this policy would lead to more regulation by the government and create a burden for Medicaid-eligible parents to prove their employment.

“My concern is people will lose eligibility, not because they’re not working, but because the paperwork gets lost,” Watson said.

**February 26, 2018**

Link to audio: <http://kbia.org/post/afternoon-newscast-february-27-2018#stream/0>

Missouri lawmakers are using different approaches to gun reform almost two weeks after a mass school shooting in Florida. KBIA's Sarah Kellogg reports

**0226GUNBILLS**

**TRT:44.6**

**SOC**

*Multiple lawmakers introduced gun legislation to a packed hearing room on Monday. While the eight bills all dealt with firearms, some would add restrictions while others would decrease regulation.*

*The bill that gathered the most attention would allow guns without a concealed carry permit in current "gun-free zones" that are private property such as daycare centers, hospitals, and amusement parks.*

*College campuses and the Capitol would require a conceal and carry permit.*

*Representative Jered Taylor, the bill's sponsor, stated that these areas are currently vulnerable to attacks.*

**0226TAYLOR**

**TRT:12**

**"...to**

**arise"**

***"It does not allow more people to get guns, but what it does is: it allows individuals to stop and attack if the need were to arise"***

*Many spoke in favor and in opposition of the bill.*

*Reporting from Jefferson City, I'm Sarah Kellogg, KBIA news*

**March 5, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/house-bill-would-restrict-access-pornography#stream/0>

Multiple individuals spoke on behalf of a House bill Monday afternoon that would create more restrictions on accessing pornography. The bill, entitled the “Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Act,” would prohibit distributors from selling any devices that would provide access to obscene material that has no “literary, artistic, political or scientific value” unless the devices are equipped with blocking software. Other content that would be banned includes websites that promote prostitution or facilitate human trafficking.

The blocking software could be disabled if anyone over the age of 18 makes a request to the distributor and pays a one-time fee of \$20 and acknowledges a letter that states obscene images will no longer be barred. The bill also would establish a reporting mechanism such as a call center or website where obscene material can be reported and ultimately blocked. Material not considered obscene, but that is blocked, could also be reported. Distributors have five days to block or unblock reported content.

Under the legislation, the attorney general or a prosecutor may seek action against any distributor that knowingly allows such content. The infraction would be considered a misdemeanor with maximum punishment of less than a year in prison, or a fine of up to \$500 for each image. Christian Sevier, a proponent of the bill, dismissed the idea that states would have trouble determining what defines a pornographic image.

“Ignorance of the law is no excuse, so anyone who kind of peddles that, kind of floats that narrative is basically just an advocate for the continued distribution of pornography to minors,” Sevier said. In total, seven people spoke in favor of the bill, including Nanette Ward,

chair of the Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition. She says survivors of human trafficking have spoken to the organization on how pornography was used in their experience.

“Pornography has played a significant part in their trafficking, whether they’d been exposed in the grooming process or whether it was forced upon them as sort of instruction to be sex trafficked,” Ward said. Jim Durham, who represents the Consumer Technology Association, spoke in opposition of the bill, believing that it would put a burden on the distributors as opposed to stopping the production of pornography.

“The problem is not the messenger, the problem is the message,” Durham said. The bill also creates the “Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Prevention Fund,” within the state treasury.

**March 6, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/bill-advances-industrial-hemp-pilot-program#stream/0>

Note: Story was co-written by Missouriian Reporter Katie Parkins

The prospects for industrial hemp in Missouri are looking up this year. Missouri Senators advanced a bill Tuesday that would create a pilot program in the state to study the growth, cultivation, processing and marketing of industrial hemp in cooperation with Missouri's Department of Agriculture. Members of the General Assembly has been working on pilot programs for the growth and research of industrial hemp for three years. Lawmakers in the Missouri House introduced such pilot programs in 2016 and 2017, but they have never made it through the Senate.

Hemp is used in a variety of everyday products such as lotions, oils, clothes and other materials. Sen. Brian Munzlinger, R-Williamstown, the bill's sponsor, said Missouri used to be one of the world's largest providers of hemp. Multiple senators expressed support for the bill, believing it could lead to economic growth.

"I hope it gets across the finish line because, again, I don't think individuals are paying attention to the economic impact and the positives that this bill will have on the state of Missouri," Sen. Jamilah Nasheed, D-St. Louis, said. Any prospective hemp grower would need to apply for a permit and pay an application fee to farm hemp. Anyone convicted of a drug-related felony in the past five years would not qualify for this permit. Prospective hemp growers would not be allowed to farm less than 10 acres worth of hemp plants and would not be able to farm more than forty acres worth. Munzlinger said this is because the program is research driven.

"I don't want the backyard gardens raising industrial hemp. This is an agricultural crop, and that's what it's intended to be," Munzlinger said. The bill allows institutions of higher education to work with the Department of Agriculture to participate in the pilot program, but their plots of industrial hemp plants would be limited to 20 acres.

Sen. Bill Eigel, R-Weldon Springs, expanded the bill to allow for there to be 2,000 total acres of industrial hemp across the state. Originally, Eigel's amendment allowed up to 200 acres of hemp cultivation per grower. After some senators expressed concern on that large of an expansion, Eigel rescinded that section of the amendment. In the past, critics have raised concerns about legalizing marijuana. One of the primary differences between marijuana and industrial hemp is the level of THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, that is known for the high it gives marijuana users. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, industrial hemp does not exceed a THC level of 0.3 percent. Marijuana can have levels of THC as high as 20 percent. The bill allows the Department of Agriculture to inspect a participant's hemp crop at any time during its growth. Any hemp crop that contains a THC concentration greater than 0.3 percent would be destroyed.

Munzlinger added, "You don't want marijuana growing close to this crop because they cross pollinate and each one will ruin the other. So actually I guess what I got is a marijuana eradication bill." The Senate will now need to pass the bill on a third reading before the Missouri House of Representatives can hear it.

**March 14, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/house-holds-public-hearing-new-gun-bills#stream/0>

The House General Laws Committee held public hearings Tuesday night on two bills related to guns after already hearing at least ten gun bills this session. One bill would allow a gun owner with a concealed carry permit to bring their firearm into a place of worship. Currently, the law allows guns if given permission by the minister or whoever is in charge.

The bill originally provided two possibilities for a house of worship. It could post a sign explicitly barring guns, or it could allow regular conceal and carry permit practices. However, Rep. Rocky Miller, R-Lake Ozark, the bill's sponsor, added an amendment allowing them to also designate who could carry firearms into the building, saying churches contacted him and requested this change.

“Got quite a few phone calls, quite a few emails and a lot of them from churches that said you know we kind of like being able to see and know who is carrying, and we like to give that permission,” Miller said. The other bill, entitled the “Safe Schools Act” creates policies concerning firearms in schools. It makes schools with a firearm on site post signage that says it they prepared to react to a threat with a deadly force. It also makes school districts send a written note to guardians if it does not arm an authorized employee. Rep. Robert Ross, R-Yukon, the bill's sponsor, says the bill is ultimately about the safety of children in schools.

“I'm a parent, I've got an eight-year-old and a nine-year-old, and I absolutely want our schools to take advantage of the option, to do everything they that they can to protect our students,” Ross said. Another part of the legislation requires schools hiring a potential employee to contact their previous employer to see if any violations of school regulations did or did not

occur. This aspect of the bill received opposition from the Missouri National Education Association.

“We want to make sure that the due process rights of any person, in particular education employees, are respected.” Otto Fajen, Legislative Director of the MNEA, said. The committee also passed a bill that bans the selling or possession of firearms to those convicted of domestic violence.

**April 3, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/missouri-bill-would-change-how-minors-are-charged-crimes#stream/0>

Nine people testified during a house committee meeting Tuesday evening, on behalf of a bill that would change how minors are charged with crimes. The bill, which would be enacted in 2021, requires individuals under the age of 18 to be tried as juveniles for most crimes, unless they are certified as an adult. Minors could still be charged as adults for violent or serious crimes such as murder or robbery. Senator Wayne Wallingford, the bill's sponsor, believes the legislation could help Missourians in multiple ways.

"I had three goals in mind with this bill. First of all, to save our youth. Second: to make Missouri safer and finally to save taxpayer dollars through less costs and having more income producing citizens," Wallingford said. According to Wallingford, Missouri is only one of five states that has yet to raise the age for juvenile court jurisdiction. The Senate passed the legislation unanimously in early March, with a vote of 31-0. It also received ample support during its public hearing in the House Judiciary Committee. Helen Sloan, a resident of St. Louis, spoke in support of the bill saying throwing money into Missouri's prison system is not the answer.

"We can't afford to keep spending money on prison and detention and punishment at the expense of educating our young people," Sloan said. While she approved of the intent of the bill, Representative Gina Mitten expressed concern over the bill's funding because of the increased cost of the juvenile system in a tight budget year. Mitten said she did not want to mandate a policy that could potentially not be funded and wished this policy would have been discussed

during the budget process. At least two proposed house bills would also require those under 18 to be tried as juveniles, but neither bill has advanced as far as the Senate legislation.

**April 4, 2018**

Link to audio and web: <http://kbia.org/post/tanf-penalties-come-under-scrutiny-senate-hearing#stream/0>

A House bill that limits how Missouri residents can spend temporary assistance funding received scrutiny during a Senate committee hearing Wednesday morning. The legislation, which passed the House with a vote of 100 to 46, would stop residents from using their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF cards, to access cash. It also makes it illegal to purchase certain items like alcohol, tobacco products or pornography. The legislation establishes a three-tiered punishment system, where the maximum penalty disqualifies a user from using TANF for a period of five years. Representative J. Eggleston, R- Maysville, the bill's sponsor, says the new policy would not cause any major changes for people who use EBT cards

“Every Walmart, every Dollar General and convenience stores take them. So, the necessity to convert them to cash to then turn around and buy something really isn't there as much as it used to be anymore,” Eggleston said. Colleen Coble, of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, spoke against the bill, saying society is not completely cash free and cash is needed in some situations.

“The whole TANF program design is now to get you into a job. How do you get into a job with dirty clothes? You can't use an EBT card at a laundromat,” Coble said. Senator David Sater, R-Cassville, asked Coble suggestions on how to solve the problem of those abusing their TANF funding.

“You understand that there is a problem here, a problem with using the money from the EBD cards for things as mentioned for the bill?” Coble disagreed.

“I don’t agree with the premise that this is a program rife with fraud,” Coble said. If the legislation passes the Senate Seniors, Families and Children Committee, it will then head to the Senate floor.

## Chapter 5: Professional Analysis

### **You Should Definitely, Probably, Maybe Still Issue That Newspaper Endorsement**

**Many still see a value in newspaper endorsements, though just how relevant or worthwhile it is to pursue one may depend on who you are talking to.**

I feel like I'm never going to stop thinking about the 2016 presidential election. I will occasionally be transported back to election night and relive the pure shock I felt once the race was called. I have a feeling I am not the only journalist who feels this way. Immediately after the election ended, I read take after take where journalists asked themselves, after months of polls and speculation, how could we "the media" have predicted the result so incorrectly? These articles cited polling numbers. They cited previous candidates where lesser scandals brought them down. They also cited newspaper endorsements.

If newspaper endorsements elected presidents, Hillary Clinton would be in the White House. She received an overwhelming number of endorsements, with even normally conservative papers endorsing her and USA Today issuing a non-endorsement of Donald Trump. However, endorsements do not equal election victories, and the fact that Trump is our president made me wonder not if newspaper endorsements are influential, but if people care they are written at all. This led to a personal quest of trying to find out what people really think about newspapers endorsements and media influence.

If I wanted to try to answer this question, I needed to talk to more than just those in the newspaper business. I also needed to look at this question from a more local perspective. While

Clinton and Trump may be the reason why I became interested in this topic, newspapers endorse more than presidents. In the end, I talked to editors, politicians, professors in communication and politics and a political advisor all in the state of Missouri about newspaper endorsements, if candidates still seek them out, if technology has affected their influence, and if the practice of issuing them should even continue. After conducting these interviews and seeing the similarities and differences in my interviewees' answers, I have come to some realizations about endorsements, and how technology has changed elections and campaigns forever.

*How relevant an endorsement is depends who you ask.*

I began my interviews by asking: just how much do campaigns value newspaper endorsements? The answers I received to this question, and all of my questions after that, greatly varied depending on who was talking. More often than not, I found that those who shared professions shared similar viewpoints. Unsurprisingly, those in the media business were resolute: candidates definitely value the newspaper endorsement. Not only that, in the case of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, candidates frequently ask to meet with the editorial board in hopes of being featured in the paper. Tod Robberson, the editor of the editorial section for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, says what he sees at the paper defies the current belief that endorsements matter less than they used to.

“We find ourselves inundated with requests from candidates, Republicans, Democrats, Independents, you name it, to meet with us. And they get very upset when we won't meet with them,” Robberson said.

Considering the St. Louis Post Dispatch is one of the largest papers in the state of Missouri, with a circulation rate of 172,822 and over 218,000 likes on Facebook, it makes sense

that this particular paper would be in demand for endorsements. However, this belief that candidates value the endorsement continued with those involved with smaller papers as well.

Steve Booher, the news director of the St. Joseph News Press Gazette, a paper with a circulation rate of 24,382 and over 24,000 Facebook likes, said that candidates ask whether or not the paper is going to endorse them. Booher believes the endorsement is another feather in a candidate's cap they can advertise.

In Columbia, Missouri, Hank Waters III, the editorial writer and former owner of The Columbia Tribune, a paper with a circulation of 17,875 and over 14,800 likes on Facebook, noted how the party of the candidate may affect how badly they may want an endorsement.

“If they think that I have the reputation as a liberal and they're very conservative, they're not going to be as interested in it. But in our particular case we've always tried to be objective, and we will agree with one side or the other,” Waters said.

Dr. Mitchell McKinney, a professor of communications, believes that campaigns valued the newspaper endorsement. He had a similar answer to Booher, believing that these endorsements are great advertisement fodder for political campaigns and candidates.

However, when talking to Jonathan Ratliff, a political consultant who mainly works with conservative candidates, sees it differently.

“I would say it doesn't matter a lot to me because most of the time newspapers don't endorse my candidate, but I still win,” Ratliff said.

***Politicians value the endorsement more than you think.***

Other than a campaign manager or a political consultant, the individuals who could give me the most direct answer to whether or not campaigns value the newspaper endorsements are politicians, all of whom were candidates first.

There was consensus among the politicians I interviewed that the endorsement mattered at least a little bit. However, Missouri House Representative Pat Conway, a Democrat who represents the St. Joseph area, says over the 30 years he has been involved in politics, he has seen the value of the endorsement decrease. He cited the ability of readers to get their news at other outlets instead of relying on the paper as one reason for this shift.

Missouri State Senator Caleb Rowden, a Republican who represents Boone County (including Columbia, Missouri), also thinks the value of the endorsement has changed, but believes an established newspaper still can influence voters.

“I still think there is value, and certainly in mid-Missouri where the Tribune endorsement has carried some weight in some cases,” Rowden said. However, when asked if his campaigns put out effort to gain an endorsement, he said it was not the top priority of his campaign. While he does meet with Waters during campaign season, in his experience he does not expect the endorsement, so he is not going to work particularly hard for it.

Representative Kip Kendrick, a Democrat representing parts of Columbia, ran unopposed during his first election and against an independent in his second election. Even though Kendrick’s races are not necessarily competitive, he still values newspaper endorsements. However, like Rowden, Kendrick said he focused more on knocking on doors and building name recognition than nabbing an endorsement during his first election. Despite this, Kendrick does value Waters’ opinion.

“One time in particular I filed a bill a couple years ago...an ethics bill that Hank Waters called me out on in an editorial, and I value his opinion so much and his editorials that I, after he put out the editorial, I called him to talk to him about it,” Kendrick said.

While it was reassuring to hear the politicians I interviewed overall speak in favor of the endorsement and of the press in general, I can't say I was too surprised by Rowden's and Kendrick's answers. Since Columbia is home to the University of Missouri and its journalism school, journalism and reporting are a huge part of Columbia's identity, which may make Kendrick and Rowden value the press more than other Missouri representatives would.

***Where and when an election is may affect an endorsement's influence.***

When I was asking about the importance of the election, the idea of the size of the race making a difference in an endorsement's relevance repeatedly came up during my interviews.

The overall belief from those I interviewed was that the smaller and less advertised the race, the more important the endorsement became. Elections in smaller towns or at least areas with less media coverage, could benefit from a press endorsement. Dr. James Endersby, a political science professor at the University of Missouri, has little faith that a newspaper endorsement has any impact on the presidential election, but in a local election, the endorsement could make a difference in the result. This also included races where a candidate does not run on a political party, such as school board or judge elections.

“When you don't have a party label on the ballot, if you don't have a recognized incumbent or something, the campaign needs to show that there is a real viable candidate behind there, and that's where they may have a greater impact,” Endersby said.

Waters also brought up the notion that the size of the election makes a difference, with candidates caring more about an endorsement when the smaller the race. Waters said his longtime tradition of issuing endorsements has created a relationship between himself and longtime readers.

Even, Ratliff, who normally spends little effort working towards getting a newspaper endorsement, said smaller races possibly gain more from a paper endorsement. With these smaller races, Ratliff at minimum makes sure his candidate has a working relationship with the press.

Where the election is taking place and the size of it are not the only factors that may make a newspaper endorsement more influential. When the endorsement happens could help as well. Robberson refrains from endorsing any candidate in the St. Louis Post Dispatch during the primary stage, mainly because there are just too many candidates at that point.

“I will get a phone call from a campaign manager saying, when do you start interviewing candidates for this primary race? And I normally will tell them, ‘Look, we are a small staff, and almost certainly will not endorse in the primaries except in very exceptional circumstances.’”

While Robberson said he doesn’t normally issue endorsements during the primary stage, according to Endersby, that’s when some candidates may want the endorsement.

“Not many editorial boards were endorsing at the time of the Republican presidential primaries, but that’s the stage where they can have a bigger impact,” Endersby said.

For Rowden, a Republican, an endorsement during the primary stage could hurt his campaign.

“Because the Tribune is perceived to lean left, and for me as a Republican if I’m trying to win a Republican primary, having a left leaning entity endorse me may not be a good thing, right?” Rowden said. However, once the campaign turns to the general election, Rowden said an endorsement would more likely help him get elected. Overall, the demographic and timing factors surrounding an election could greatly change how influential an endorsement is.

***Candidates now must juggle traditional media and new media during campaigns.***

As I received answer after answer about the waning influence of the endorsement, the natural question to ask was: how else are campaigns reaching out to voters? The answer? Social media. With the national conversations about Facebook's influence in the election, to Missouri's governor using Facebook Live to announce policies as opposed to going through news conferences, social media and the influences of those you know are now a major strategy with elections. This discussion on social media also prompted the question of who is more influential, newspaper endorsements, or endorsements from people you personally know?

Rowden, who said his own campaign spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on social media, said this strategy should be used to a candidate's advantage. He noted President Trump's tendency to use Twitter frequently to reach out to his base.

"It would be foolish of somebody like that, who has an audience that big, not to take advantage of it in some way," Rowden said. However, Rowden also believes this particular strategy should not be used purely to avoid or devalue the media.

Campaign advisor Ratliff has seen this strategy work to his advantage. While he says he still introduces his candidates to local media and wants them to have a friendly relationship with the press, he would much rather put out his own content and connect with people that way.

"I think I can do a much better job having a direct conversation with people, as a Republican especially," Ratliff said. Another perk to this strategy is that it costs less than the traditional method of paying for ads. According to Ratliff, the \$2,500 a full-page ad costs at the Tribune could go a lot further with social media use. As far as who is more influential, he was resolute in his opinion that the opinion of someone you know matters more than a newspaper endorsement.

Even though Robberson sees many campaigns try to win an election just by using social media alone and even sees the appeal of it for smaller elections, he does not believe it is an effective strategy.

“Ultimately to start off with that antagonistic relationship by saying, we don't need your endorsement, we don't want it, we can win without you....’ You want to do it that way, go for it. I have yet to see it work to the candidate’s advantage,” Robberson said.

Booher of the St. Joseph News Press echoed that there are benefits to going around the press. He sees why relaying your campaign messages without going through a second party such as an editorial board could be appealing.

“With social media, for the most part you can control the message. If you interview with a newspaper editorial board or even with a reporter, you can't just say what you want. Your comments are going to be vetted and your comments are going to be verified. And on social media, none of that necessarily happens,” Booher said. Booher was also the only media person I interviewed that believed that the endorsement of someone you know is probably more influential than a newspaper endorsement, stating that the anonymity of some endorsements causes readers to speculate who exactly is making those decisions.

Representative Conway agreed that there appears to be a shift to websites such as Facebook or Twitter for media consumption. However, Conway also brought up an new idea: that there could also be a shift of people withdrawing themselves from public debate. In Conway’s eyes, some people have withdrawn from the constant barrage of news that occurs every day, and he is not sure how to attract those people back to the voting booth.

From a communication perspective, there are a lot of factors that have influenced the shift toward social media, according to McKinney. The downsizing and decline of newspapers is

one factor; another is the overall shift of news consumption from print to online. As far as which is more influential, McKinney believes people you know carry more weight. He said that for newspapers to be influential, someone has to already be a subscriber to that newspaper, and with readership down, fewer people are getting that information.

Endersby believes, barring a major scandal, any free press tends to be positive press for a campaign. However, that does not mean that a candidate can solely pick one strategy over the other.

“You need some kind of media...even if it’s putting up yard signs and trying to get on the local radio, but at the same time you have some kind of face to face contact for all these campaigns, that’s where it’s more effective,” Endersby said. Despite acknowledging that campaigns need to pursue both strategies, he leaned more toward social networks as being more influential because people tend to vote the same way as their peers do. When someone exists in a social media bubble where a different opinion may not be circulated as much, it makes sense that a newspaper may not be able to break into that bubble. However, Endersby also said that the research on this topic is vague.

Echoing Endersby, Kendrick also believes that pursuing both strategies is important for a campaign’s success. He sees the obvious appeal in being able to control your message and speaking directly to voters. He also believes building trust in a community would often earn an endorsement anyway.

“You have to put out the effort to earn the trust of individuals, and I think any fair minded editorial board or anyone who’s going to put out an endorsement, if you have their trust and if they see that you’re committed to serving the public, that’s how you earn the

endorsement,” Kendrick said. He believes the newspaper endorsement is critical because it may reach the constituent whose door hadn’t been knocked on yet.

***The endorsement is not the only useful political shortcut.***

Newspaper endorsements are helpful to voters because, as Robberson puts it, they put in the time to learn as much as they can about candidates because their readers don’t have the same amount of time to do so. Information that could take a decent amount of internet surfing, is printed all in one place and saves the reader time and energy on thinking about who to vote for.

These time saving methods are sometimes called information shortcuts. I asked if there were shortcuts, such as endorsements, that could be valuable to a campaign or to a voter? It turns out, the endorsement is not the only shortcut that can be useful to campaigns. Furthermore, shortcuts can be useful to media outlets as well.

Other than his endorsements, Waters talked about a voting guide that he writes before an election that rounds up and lists all of his endorsement for that particular election season. According to Waters, this guide helps voters because it eliminates the work of searching through the Columbia Tribune’s website and tracking those endorsements down.

For his own use, Robberson stated that campaign websites as shortcuts are helpful to him because at times they are a good quick source of information that he can use to write endorsements because perhaps the editorial board did not get enough time with the candidate during the interview.

For the lawmakers, talking points came up frequently as a shortcut that they find useful to their campaigns. Having a sound bite on an issue that a candidate keeps talking about helps them stay on message and also makes that message fairly known to the public.

One of the most interesting points brought up about this idea came from Rowden, saying that one example of an information shortcut is fear mongering. Candidates can take a complicated issue and boil it down to a single talking point that can alarm constituents.

He said that when examining really large, complex issues, there are always going to be extreme circumstances that support one argument. These extreme instances are a way for some politicians to boil down a complex policy to something alarmingly and sometimes inaccurately more simple.

Ratliff went even simpler, saying that the party of a candidate is the only shortcut a voter needs to know who to vote for.

***The relationship between the press and candidates or politicians has changed, but that does not make the media irrelevant.***

In addition to asking specifically about the newspaper endorsement and why it may be less relevant today than in the past, I wanted to get a larger sense of the relationship between the media and campaigns today. How has the relationship changed, and has the media become less relevant in elections? It's impossible to deny that social media and technology has changed how campaigns are run or how newspapers cover elections. However, while candidates may have new ways to circumvent the media, many believed the media still plays a valuable role in elections.

While Waters believes that papers have become less relevant in elections with one major factor being a decrease in readership in general, personally, he says he hasn't seen a decrease in politicians who are willing to talk to him for the purpose of an endorsement.

As someone who does go through the process of talking to Waters, Rowden believes that the media is a little less relevant. He also believes that the current relationship between the press and candidates will balance itself out and that he wants the relationship to get better. As far as

how long it will take for the relationship to change, that depends on who is in power next. Even then, Rowden believes some of the methods used to circumvent the media now will probably be reworked in the future, no matter who is in power.

Robberson believes that the relationship between campaigns and newspapers have changed for the worse, but that some politicians and campaigns still respect the opinions of the paper. As far as the relevancy of the paper endorsement, it's as strong as ever.

Ratliff disagreed and reiterated his earlier beliefs, saying candidates who are not inclined to meet with an editorial team either due to nerves or a bad past experience with the press, now do not have to. They don't need to make themselves vulnerable or care what a reporter has to say.

The only person I talked to who was just as confident as the editorial editor of the Post Dispatch about the relevancy of the press was Representative Kendrick.

"I think that's part of the reason why so many candidates seek to control the message and shut out the press and speak directly to people, is that they want to be able to tell their story because they're afraid of what story's going to be told, and I think that that shows the relevancy of the press more than anything else," Kendrick said.

McKinney agreed with the idea that there is an antagonistic relationship between the press and politicians, but said that's how it should be. To him, that element of the press has not changed no matter how technology has evolved, and he hopes that it remains that way because media organizations need to serve as a check on politicians.

***The Ultimate Question: To Endorse, or not to Endorse.***

Finally, at the end of each of my interviews, I asked the question. The one I'd been waiting to ask all along: Should newspapers continue the practice of the newspaper endorsement? The answer?

Yes.

Probably.

If they want to.

Okay, so in no way did I get a clear-cut answer on this. The majority of those I talked to said that newspapers should continue to endorse candidates. All three politicians believe the endorsement should still be printed in papers.

Not surprisingly, the media folks I talked to also believed the endorsement should still continue. While he doesn't give it much thought, Ratliff believed endorsements should continue if newspapers believe they were impactful.

As far as to the degree of how much it matters, that depends on who you talk to. I think the best summary of my findings comes from McKinney.

"I think they will continue. Whether they should, they've got to write something right?"

After listening to my interviewees, all of whom work on a more statewide scale than a national scale, my thoughts have gone back to the 2016 election. One of the largest takeaways I learned during this project is that the scale of an election more than likely affects the relevancy or effectiveness of an endorsement. Repeatedly my interviewees stated that low-information markets, or races that may not get as much coverage as larger races, might benefit more from the endorsement from the press. The presidency is the largest stage possible for an election. While maybe one paper is covering a school board election, most of the time a voter cannot escape coverage of a presidential candidate. Therefore, they have a greater opportunity to make up their

own mind on who they want to vote for, and no endorsement is going to make that much of a difference. While the number of endorsements Clinton received may have been newsworthy, that does not mean they changed any minds.

The other topic I've thought about since my interviews is the relationship between media institutions and politicians. I was not surprised to hear editors, those in politics and professors tell me how the relationship between the press and those who are elected has soured a little bit. That claim is very apparent when looking at the White House and the popularization of the term "fake news." However, what I was surprised at was the admission that despite the rise of social media, the impact and relevancy of traditional media outlets remains. Almost everyone I talked to, including all three politicians, agreed on the importance of the press, with one saying he hopes the relationship shifts back to one that is more amicable. So, the argument that the media is irrelevant when covering politicians or elections is inaccurate when looking at a local scale

If I had more time to conduct more interviews, there are some further concepts I would have liked to explore and more people I would have liked to talk with.

I'll admit that my interview subjects are very white and very male. Some of that could not be avoided, as all of the newspaper employees in charge of editorials were white men. Availability was another factor that influenced who I interviewed. Overall, a women's perspective or the perspective of a person of color would have been highly valuable to my project and may have differed from everyone else I talked to.

Another person I would have loved to talk to is a candidate that does not have a party listed next to their name on a ballot. As political consultant John Ratliff said, someone's political party serves as an information shortcut to voters. If a voter does not know the specific policies of a candidate, the D or R next to their names could be enough for a voter to make their decision.

However, for a candidate running in a non-party election such as a school board position, there is no shortcut for voters to use. In this case, would a candidate find a newspaper endorsement more valuable since it means more exposure? I do not know the answer in this case, but interviewing someone who currently resides on a school board would be a valuable source.

During my project I interviewed people involved in politics, academics and newspaper industry men. However, I did not interview any voters, the people whom candidates want to reach and whom newspapers hope their editorials influence. A source that could have been valuable to talk to is a voter, possibly a community organizer, or someone else equally aware of their local politics. Asking them if endorsements influence their voting habits would have been a great source of information that this project lacks.

Finally, another idea I would have explored if given more time is whether newspaper endorsements lead to further polarization of voters. This topic came up when I talked about the influence of social media and whether a personal endorsement would be more influential than a newspaper endorsement. However, I would like to go a little more in depth into whether newspaper endorsements only reach those who already value the press and that an endorsement only enforces the idea that the newspaper is reliable if they endorse your candidate or are biased if they do not. This polarization of the editorial pages can lead to the assumption that an entire paper is biased depending on its coverage.

Throughout my interviews, I was told plenty of reasons as to why a candidate should find the endorsement worth pursuing. Any press, barring a major scandal, is good for a candidate because it gets your name out there to the public. Newspapers may just reach that voter that a candidate did not meet personally. If you're an editor or a reporter of a statewide or local paper, your opinions might matter more than the national results would have you believe, since smaller

racers mean less coverage, meaning a single endorsement may be impactful. Furthermore, some candidates and politicians truly believe in the value of the press and think endorsements are still worth conducting, even if the papers do not endorse them.

However, I also got answers that make me believe newspaper endorsements are fast losing relevance. With the emergence of social media, money and time spent online could reach a larger audience than an endorsement ever would. Additionally, with social media, a candidate avoids the tough questions of an editorial board and relays his or her own messages to voters directly. The matter of a decline in readership was also brought up as evidence that the endorsement should not continue.

In the end, I cannot offer a definitive decision on whether or not newspapers should endorse a candidate. It appears as though the relevancy of the endorsement changes depending on who you talk to, and that is a fact I do not expect will change in years to come.

## **Appendix A: Changes to Project from Proposal**

One change was made to my project in comparison to my project proposal. Initially, I was to examine the newspaper the *Warren County Record* and their endorsement habits. However, when I began searching for endorsements on the paper's website, I found an article explaining why they do not issue endorsements at all. This complicated my analysis since I needed to talk to those involved with papers that do issue endorsements. After asking my committee's permission, I switched from looking at the Warren County Record to the St. Joseph News-Press instead. I ended up interviewing the multimedia editor for the St. Joseph News-Press and interviewing a lawmaker from that area.

## **Appendix B: Project Proposal**

### **Worth Pursuing? An Analysis Into the Relevance of the Newspaper Endorsement**

On the night of the 2016 election, I was covering a democratic watch party in Jefferson City, when things started to go south for Hillary Clinton. I saw the enthusiasm of the party begin to wane as the likelihood of her winning the presidency seemed less and less likely. I returned to the newsroom and was working on my story when the election was finally called. Donald Trump won the election, in a move that surprised many media organizations.

While I was just as surprised, I was really intrigued about why members of the media were as surprised as they were and why the polling data was as off as it was. After Trump was inaugurated, I once again found myself looking into the media's coverage of the election. However, this time I was more interested in the editorial board instead of the newsroom. I remembered back in the fall how it made the news when the Arizona Republic, a conservative leaning paper, endorsed Clinton. I remember thinking then how significant it was that a paper that always endorsed Republicans endorsed Clinton. This endorsement of Clinton was the instance that sparked my interest in newspaper endorsements and whether or not politicians and campaigns thought them to be worthwhile or significant.

The purpose of this professional project is to look at the influence of the political endorsement, primarily through the lens of a campaign. This project hopes to gain insight about the political endorsement, how the relationship between politicians and the media has evolved as the way users consume media has changed, and how political campaigns have changed how they interact with the media. Another angle to consider in this project is, if endorsements are no

longer valued, is it worth it for a newspaper to give an endorsement in a time where the lines of editorial and news are becoming more frequently blurred?

**Professional skills.**

For the professional component of my project, I will be the statehouse reporter in Jefferson City for Columbia's NPR member station KBIA. In this position, I will be working at the statehouse an average of 30 hours a week. I would be at the statehouse for the entirety of Tuesdays and Wednesdays and at minimum, half days on Mondays and Thursdays.

The bulk of my work for KBIA will be filing daily stories from the Statehouse about news from the legislature. This could range from a story on a committee to covering a debate on a bill on the verge of being passed. In order to maximize the amount of stories that come from Jefferson City, I will be coordinating with St. Louis Public Radio's Marshall Griffin to make sure we do not cover the same story, unless there are two angles to be covered. By working with Marshall, we can increase the amount of coverage available to public radio stations across the state of Missouri.

In addition to covering the statehouse on a daily basis, I will also conduct at least two in-depth, politically focused investigations. These investigations could involve using Access Missouri; KBIA's Missouri state government database, or other Missouri government data.

Finally, I will be assisting Mark Horvit in helping student reporters by helping them adjust to reporting at the Statehouse and helping them with radio reporting aspect such as equipment usage and reporting basics.

**Professional research component.**

My professional analysis will attempt to answer whether or not political campaigns believe that newspaper endorsements are valuable and/or are worth their time trying to earn. This

project will look into the process that political campaigns go through on deciding whether newspaper endorsements are still relevant to today's political news consumption.

This idea came into fruition when I thought about the most recent presidential election. Despite the fact that much of the previous election season was unprecedented in many ways, I was most interested in media patterns and whether anything changed significantly in how newsrooms acted. Closer to the election, I noticed more stories on the number of newspaper endorsements both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump earned. While Clinton received nominations from over fifty editorial boards of the top 100 largest newspapers, Donald Trump only earned two (Wilson, 2016). However, the number of endorsements was not an indication as to who would become the president. While Clinton gained the greater number endorsements from editorial boards, Donald Trump inevitably won the presidency.

This disconnect between the number of endorsements and the victor of the presidency led me to wonder whether newspaper endorsements actually matter and if candidates view endorsements as a valuable commodity to their campaign. While determining if newspaper endorsements affect elections would be interesting, it is almost impossible to determine causality with the amount of time I have. Instead of looking into whether media endorsements influence voters and therefore influence elections, this professional analysis will look into how endorsements are viewed and perceived by campaigns.

This professional analysis will be completed using semi-structured interviews to answer the questions: How do campaigns view the importance of endorsements? How have these views changed over time, and how have news organizations changed their practices to reflect these changing attitudes?

I will be focusing on the endorsements of local papers in three Missouri cities ranging in size. I will be conducting a maximum of ten interviews, which breaks down to about three interviews per area. To get insight from the campaign perspective, I am going to interview political consultants and Missouri lawmakers who have been through at least two election cycles. To gain the journalistic perspective, I plan to interview the editors of newspapers who publish local endorsements. I also hope to interview a political scientist to get a non-political, non-journalistic perspective. Additionally, I hope to interview someone who can give me a past perspective on endorsements in the state of Missouri.

This topic is relevant to journalism currently because journalists are already adjusting how they cover politicians and politics due to the changing media landscape and how politicians can circumvent the media and relay most information to voters through their own social media accounts. The idea that politicians, political advisors and others associated with campaigns may not see a value in newspaper endorsements could change not only how politicians interact with the press, but also could change how journalists cover politicians. This topic is particularly timely now because the 2016 election is still fairly recent in history, and while a lot of focus has been on President Trump and his attacks on journalistic institutions, not as much attention has been on the relationship with state politicians and the journalists who cover them.

I hope that journalists who read my professional analysis gain an insight into political journalism not just through a journalistic lens, but also through the lens of those being endorsed or not endorsed. Depending on the results of my professional analysis, editorial boards may decide to change the methods on how they endorse candidates or might cease endorsing candidates all together.

### **Theoretical framework.**

While searching for a theory to use, I knew that I wanted to find something that incorporated both media consumption and potentially social media usage. The reason I wanted to include a social media angle is due to the growing trend of politicians reaching out to their voters through social media as opposed to going to the press to relay information. I discovered the more specific theory of information shortcuts; a theory that I believe greatly applies to my professional analysis. The theory of information shortcuts examines how individuals, such as media consumers, voters and others look for ways information is condensed and therefore is more easily understood. Information shortcuts save the reader time and theoretically allow them to understand and evaluate the information they just processed more easily. One simple example of an information shortcut would be a newspaper headline. The reader believes they know what the story is about by reading one sentence, and may decide to not read the entire article to save time.

I believe the information shortcut theory is the best to use for this professional analysis because newspaper endorsements are a type of information shortcut. As opposed to researching a candidate and learning about all of their policies, voters may turn to their local papers for guidance to find a lot of this information all in one place. Readers who respect and trust their local paper might see their endorsement of a certain candidate and decide that they will vote for that candidate. The opposite could happen as well. An individual who thinks their paper is unfair or biased may go for the other candidate. The question is whether or not candidates feel that this particular information shortcut is beneficial to their campaign or not.

As technology is evolving, so are the ways that users obtain information. Consequently, information shortcuts are changing their format as well. An example would be reading popular stories posted by Facebook friends, or trending topics as opposed to visiting the website of a paper and finding the information by oneself. This information shortcut could be beneficial to

one candidate over another if one's friends are more liberal or conservative. Overall, the theory of information shortcuts would be the best applicable theory for an analysis of endorsements and whether or not candidates find them valuable.

### **Literature review.**

The relationship between the press and the presidency has always been complicated. While neither the press or the president seem to particularly like each other, they do depend on one another. The president provides the press information concerning the affairs on the country, and the press gives the president publicity on his policies and actions. This relationship is also complicated during the campaign season. While newspapers attempt to be objective and non-biased in their reporting, papers also maintain an editorial section that publishes opinions. While the news department and the editorial department are separate, some readers may not see it that way and think a paper's editorials represent the views of the paper itself. This line becomes even more blurred when newspapers endorse a candidate.

During the past election, newspapers overall endorsed Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton over President Donald Trump. Some newspapers that had never endorsed a Democratic candidate, such as the Arizona Republic, endorsed Clinton, while USA Today, a paper that had never endorsed a candidate before, published a non-endorsement of Trump, stating they believed he was unfit to run the country. Overall, Trump received the endorsements of 9 daily newspapers and 4 weekly newspapers, while 229 dailies and 131 weeklies endorsed Hillary Clinton (Boczkowski, 2016). Despite having fewer endorsements, citizens elected Donald Trump as the next president. Since the overall political environment has become more polarized and niche as more outlets for media consumption such as Facebook and Twitter have become available, the influence of newspaper coverage and endorsements has been questioned as more individuals are

circumventing mainstream press to get their news. This phenomenon questions the influence and purpose of newspaper endorsements if citizens are going to either avoid or disregard the endorsements and instead favor the recommendations of friends that share their views. This shift in how news is consumed proposes a question other than whether or not they are effective. Instead, a more timely inquiry would be whether or not politicians and political campaigns see a value in seeking an endorsement, if they can reach their audience through other means.

This literature review examines research that addresses how influential newspaper endorsements were in previous elections and how the influence of newspapers has changed since the emergence of social media and other outlets built for news consumption. This review also examines the information shortcut theory, the idea that individuals seek out information that is more convenient and easily understandable. By analyzing literature on this topic, the review hopes to explore the question of whether or not an increase in media choice has lessened the impact of the mainstream press on the public and if political campaigns have recognized this shift and no longer see a benefit of pandering to the press.

This literature review explores the topic of newspaper endorsements. While reading research about this topic, certain themes emerged that would prove to be helpful during my research and project. The main concepts concerning the question of the relevance of newspaper endorsements are the impact of newspaper endorsements on politics, the emergence of news consumption through social media and how this has affected how news is consumed by the public, and the ideas of information shortcuts and how this theory relates to both endorsements and social media consumption. The first theme explored from the idea of endorsements is how endorsements newspapers impact elections in the United States. The second theme deals with self-polarization and the effect social media has had on newspapers and the public's perception

of the news. The third theme addresses the Information Shortcut theory and how it impacts consumers of news.

***The impact of endorsements.***

I found the most literature on the topic of whether or not newspaper endorsements are influential in elections, not whether or not politicians or the public believe that endorsements are relevant. While literature on the potential causal relationship between newspaper endorsements and election results is not what my overall project is about, it is an angle concerning endorsements worth exploring and seeing what has been written.

Two articles used the example of the 1964 presidential election in the United States to explore the impact of newspaper endorsements have on elections. Erikson's (1976) study published by the *American Journal of Political Science* argues that the shift from a majority of papers endorsing Republican candidates to instead endorsing Democratic candidates gave Democrats an advantage in the election and in most cases helped Democrats win their races. Furthermore the article states that newspaper endorsements as a whole do impact the outcome of elections and influence voters. The article challenges previous studies that claim that few voters change their minds during presidential campaigns and that the mass media does not greatly influence the minds of voters.

This study analyzed the effectiveness of endorsements by comparing 1960 and 1964 election results and looked at where voting shifts occur in relation to newspapers switching from a Republican endorsement in 1960 to a Democratic endorsement in 1964. The study chose counties where local newspapers held a monopoly on circulation. These counties also normally had a "home-county circulation equal to at least two-thirds of both the number of households in the county and the total newspaper circulation within the county." In short, these newspapers

reached a majority of citizens in the county it covered. 223 cases were studied, with nine different treatments analyzed. These “treatments” were the comparisons in newspaper endorsements between 1960 and 1964 (ex. R:R – A newspaper endorsing a republican in 1960 and in 1964, R:I – a newspaper endorsing a republican in 1960, but endorsed an independent in 1964 etc). In addition to classifying papers by their endorsement behaviors, the newspapers were also given an ideological balance number, or score based on the behaviors of a paper’s columnist as opposed to its regular reporters. A paper with a maximum liberal slant would receive a score of 5 where a maximum conservative paper would receive a score of zero. The article then combined both the ideological balance number and treatments to give an indication of how many typically conservative papers switched to endorsing a Democratic candidate. Finally, the study estimated how this changing trend in newspaper endorsements impacted voting habits. Overall, the study determined that in single-newspaper counties, the voting record was on average 5 percentage points more Democratic if the paper endorsed the Democratic candidate. Furthermore, in counties where there was more than one paper, the paper that had the more conservative ideological balance number impacted voters’ decisions more.

Overall this study suggests that newspaper endorsements did significantly influence the voting margins of Democrats in 1964. While this study provides compelling evidence that suggests a correlation between newspaper endorsements and voting habits, it limited its study to local papers, ignoring how national newspapers such as *The New York Times* might have had an impact on the public. The impact on papers with high circulation is an aspect of this study that could have provided even more information on the effectiveness of newspaper endorsements. While this study is interesting, it does more or less contradict the idea that newspaper endorsements are not as impactful as some may believe them to be. However, this study,

conducted in the 1960s is dated in that does not address the concepts of social media and media choice, themes that greatly affect how media is consumed today and consequentially how relevant it may or may not be.

Devereux's (1999) journal article also examines the role newspaper endorsements played in the 1964 presidential election. While the previous study looks into how endorsements affect the public's voting habits, Devereux's article examines the political factors that influence the endorsements themselves. The article looks at the factors that caused the shift from Republican endorsements to Democratic endorsements in 1964. The article also uses its analysis and findings and compares the findings to both the 1992 and 1996 elections. The article looks into factors such as the political involvement of the business community and the pro-business Democrat stance of President Johnson, which according to Devereux, was similar to how Clinton ran his campaigns in 1992 and '96.

The main research framework for this study was the campaign focus on public policy as opposed to voter knowledge, candidate image or other factors. Through this framework the study hopes to answer if the organized interests in public policy was a major determinant of the shift in newspaper endorsements. The article examines the policies of both Goldwater and Johnson, determining that Johnson's positions appealed more to newspapers. By studying the newspapers that endorsed Johnson during the 1964 election, Devereux sorted the endorsements into two categories that supported Johnson's election. The first was a group of pro-Democrat and consequentially pro-Johnson newspapers and an even larger group, anti-Goldwater newspapers. The study analyzes the newspaper coverage of both candidates and explores the mentality of the newspaper editors by providing regional anecdotes (the Midwest the South etc.) concerning some of the newspaper endorsements.

Overall, the article determines that the pro-Johnson and anti-Goldwater newspapers provided a positive media environment for Johnson in each region of the United States. This shift from a largely Republican-friendly press to a Democratic- friendly press gave Johnson an advantage and made it that much harder for Goldwater to get his message across to the country. Factors that largely played into the media's favor of Johnson were Johnson's business connections and the media's intense dislike of Goldwater's nationalist policies.

The study does acknowledge some limitations of the anecdotal study. Devereux acknowledges that some newspapers already had pre-existing biases that would not have been swayed by Johnson or Goldwater's policies. The article also addresses how viability also plays a role in how candidates are covered. Early on, newspapers decide how they are going to cover presidential candidates, and more often than not they are not going to change their coverage mid-campaign season unless something unprecedented and dramatic occurs. Overall this article provides a different analysis of the 1964 election and the role newspapers played in it. While the Erickson article addresses how endorsements may influence voting habits, Devereux's article discusses how the political climate impacts endorsements. Both articles addressing the 1964 election bear significance because they address historical elements of how newspaper endorsements did make a difference even over fifty years ago.

While the previous two studies were informative, they also studied elections that occurred in the 1960s, making the research possibly outdated and not reflective of the attitudes towards endorsements today. While these studies are important to consider, it is also important to recognize possible pitfalls in relying too heavily on this research as opposed to more current literature.

Chang et. all's (2015) study provides a more current example in that it explores how newspaper endorsements in the 2012 election motivated college students to vote. The study "assesses the perceptions of the influence of endorsements in the election in terms of its credibility and how the perceived effects of credible endorsements on self and on others affect college-age voters' decision making," (Chang et. all, 2015).

By conducting this study, this paper addresses current issues concerning the media such as the decline in newspaper readership, especially among young people, as well as the students' perceptions of what their peers think of a particular endorsement and how a student may act because of what they think their peers believe. This second issue is extremely relevant to the overall question of the importance of endorsements because as social media use increases, there is a claim that younger generations are influenced more by what their peers are sharing online than what they are discover themselves. This peer endorsement concept relates to how social media has changed how people consume news.

The study produces three hypotheses that address how endorsements affect college students. The first states the credibility of the newspaper endorsing a candidate in the 2012 election will impact how successful said endorsement is in influencing college voters. The second hypothesis states that the newspaper endorsements of a candidate will more likely cause a student to boycott a newspaper if said newspaper is endorsing a candidate that student disagrees with. The final hypothesis in this study is that an individual is more likely to vote for a candidate the more endorsements they have.

To test these hypotheses, the study collected data from a survey with a sample of college students. The students were asked to rate how the local newspaper's endorsement of a candidate affected their voting decision. The students were also asked to rate how national newspaper

endorsements influenced their voting decisions. Furthermore, the students rated how credible they felt said endorsements were.

The results of the survey found a correlation between how credible a student found an endorsement and how much it influenced their voting decision, which proves the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was also proven when it was statistically determined that students were more likely to boycott a newspaper that endorsed the candidate they did not agree with. Finally, the results determined that the more endorsements a candidate got, the more likely a student would “jump on the bandwagon” and vote for said candidate. This proves the third hypothesis. Overall this article explores not only the effectiveness of newspaper endorsements, but it also explores the voting habits of young voters, the very group that has been impacted the most by social media platforms. This study shows another example where there is a possibility that newspaper endorsements do affect voter habits. However, in this particular case, it also shows how individuals would rather boycott a newspaper that does not align with their predetermined ideas than change their mind and therefore their voting habits based on an endorsement they read.

### *Surprise endorsements.*

While looking into the articles that addressed the impact of endorsement, a few of the articles brought up the concept of a “surprise endorsement” which is a situation where newspaper endorsements are more effective if the paper endorses a candidate belonging to a political party that the newspaper normally does not endorse.

The study conducted by Chiang et. all (2011) analyzes the connection “between media bias and the influence of the media on voting in the context of newspaper endorsements.” The paper argues that endorsements do influence voters and that voters are more likely to consider a

newspaper's endorsement if the paper is seen as largely credible. The concept of media bias is addressed frequently in the study and addresses that endorsements are only influential if the newspaper is considered "unbiased" and how for an individual, the most "unbiased" newspaper could be too slanted in one political direction for them. The study also touched on how endorsements are more influential if they are "unexpected" such as a more Republican leaning newspaper endorsing a Democratic candidate or vice versa.

To analyze the influence of endorsements on voters, the study used a model on voters learning from newspaper endorsements. The model factored in the two hypothetical candidates running for election, a set of voters and a set of newspapers. Candidates were characterized by their eligibility to be president and their ideology, whereas voters were just characterized by their ideology. Both voters and candidates were categorized by ideology because voters are more likely to vote for their preferred party. Eligibility or "quality" was only applied to the candidate because all voters, despite their political affiliation, value that characteristic. Voters were assigned to read only one newspaper and observe an endorsement. The voter was then measured on whether or not the endorsement has changed their attitudes.

The results of the study show that the preferences of readers have an effect on their decisions regarding newspaper endorsements. Unlike previous studies, this study did look into the impact of larger newspapers. The study determined that larger papers could sway voters. This impact is even greater if the paper endorses a candidate they were not expected to endorse. For example, the study cited that one of the less impactful endorsements came from *The New York Times* who endorsed Al Gore in the 2000 election. This endorsement only swayed less than 1% of the Time's readers while the *Chicago Sun Times*' endorsement of Kerry in 2004 swayed around 3% of its readership due to its atypical pick. The study concludes that while

endorsements do influence voters, the bias newspapers may have towards a candidate do cause their readers to anticipate endorsements. When the endorsement deviates from what is expected of that paper, the endorsement is more effective. This article like others, analyzes the impact of endorsements, but unlike the other studies, takes into account how a paper's preconceived bias may influence voters before the endorsement is even printed.

Casas' et. Al (2016) study also looks at "surprise endorsements" and how they influence elections. This particular study looked at the effects of newspaper endorsements during the 100 days before the 2008 and 2012 elections. The article looked at the probability of whether or not a candidate would be elected based on endorsements. The article defines the concept of "surprise endorsements" as "when the newspaper has not traditionally endorsed the candidate's party."

The study uses a measure on winning probability and looked at the timing of the endorsements' printing within those 100 days. While the article does claim that surprise endorsements can affect election outcomes, not all surprise endorsements fall into that category. The article states that surprise endorsements may occur when a newspaper that traditionally goes for one party instead endorses another. These surprise endorsements may also appear as inconsistent when observed alongside the coverage of said paper. The study uses a strategy that estimated the causal relationship between endorsements and winning probability.

The article split electoral endorsements into two categories: demand-driven (driven by market factors) and supply-driven (mainly decided by the preferences of an owner or corporation). To differentiate their results from other literature, the study used prediction markets instead of individual voter surveys to estimate the effects of newspaper endorsements. The study also further sorted unexpected endorsements into the categories of surprise and inconsistent endorsements.

The results of the study indicated that on average, an endorsement of a Republican candidate has a moderate effect on a candidates' winning probability. Furthermore, the effect of a Republican endorsement does not depend on the circulation rate of the paper. This differs from Democratic endorsements, where they only make an impact in high circulation papers. One reason for this is that larger newspapers rarely endorse a Republican candidate. Another reason would be that in this study, it was determined that the base turnout would lean more Republican. In other words, in this cast, Democratic endorsements are needed to lead to a more democratic voting result, whereas a Republican endorsement would only "influence" an environment that would probably vote Republican anyway. The study also found that consistent and surprise endorsements had the biggest impact, while inconsistent endorsements have little to no effect on election results. Overall, this study not only looks at the effectiveness of endorsements, specifically surprise endorsements, but it also touches on situations where endorsements may not assist a candidate at all.

***Potential ineffectiveness of endorsements.***

While all of the previous articles discuss endorsement impact and in some way or another, make a case for endorsements having at least some impact, no article addresses how Hillary Clinton still lost the presidency despite earning more endorsements. The short article that appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* (2016) is the most recent article published concerning this topic and addresses the question about the 2016 election. It explores the trends of newspaper endorsements during the past election. This article is more journalistic than the previous articles mentioned. The focus of the article is how this atypical election cycle has impacted the press. Normally in an election, newspapers are often split equally on which candidate they endorse. However, in this past election, many newspapers broke their usual endorsement patterns and

endorsed Hillary Clinton even if the paper was known for endorsing Republican candidates. The article also cited *USA Today*, which did not endorse a candidate, but did print that they believed Trump was unfit to be president. This broke the USA Today tradition of never endorsing a candidate. Overall this short article cites the trends of papers in the most recent election, providing a timelier look at newspaper endorsement habits. This article on the 2016 election completely negates the impact the previous studies believe endorsements have. If the previous studies are to be believed, the surprise endorsements of conservative leaning papers of Clinton should have made a difference. They did not, calling into question the significance of endorsements and whether or not political candidates and readers see a value to them.

Overall most of the articles studying the impact of endorsements indicate there is a connection between newspaper endorsements and the success of the candidate while other articles do address the anomaly that was the most recent presidential election and question if newspapers have as great of an impact as they did in previous elections. However, the final article in this section provides the main question that I hope to answer in my project. If newspaper endorsements are supposedly impactful, why did Clinton lose the presidency? This question can be applied locally as well considering Chris Koster, the Missouri democratic candidate for governor, received the endorsements of both the Kansas City Star and The St. Louis Post Dispatch and still lost to opponent Eric Greitens. Overall, the question concerning endorsements needs to shift from whether or not they are effective to how the media landscape is changing and therefore potentially lessening the importance of endorsements.

### ***Social media's impact on the journalistic landscape.***

The emergence of social media has greatly impacted how media, especially news media, is consumed. Many readers get their news online not by going to news sites directly, but by

accessing these sites through Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets. Due to this change in how news is digested, I wanted to look at literature that examines this change and how this could possibly affect the impact of the media on its readers.

The Bakshy et. al (2015) article “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook” published in *Science Magazine* looks into how online networks influence exposure to perspectives that cut across ideological lines. The study used data that looked at the social media behaviors of 10.1 million Facebook users to see how they interacted with and shared news.

The article discusses the phenomenon of echo chambers, where individuals are only absorbing information that is shared by like-minded individuals. These filter bubbles, caused by website algorithms, limit the information users see on a daily basis. The study in this article analyzes how these filter bubbles affect media consumption.

The study used a data set that allowed them to compare the diversity of the news articles and opinions shared on Facebook in a person’s feed with the “individual stories” that were not shared and instead showed up in the News Feed section of Facebook. The study observed which stories, the ones shared or the ones on the news feed, were selected.

The study also considered the flow of how information is presented on Facebook via the News Feed, the political alignment of a story, and if the story was a hard or soft news piece.

The results of the study show that the while Facebook users tend to have Facebook friends that share their beliefs, on average 20% of a person’s Facebook friends have an ideology that is “across the aisle.” Content that did not align with a user’s beliefs was found in their feeds and according to the study, a user’s friend network was the biggest factor in deciding what media a user would consume. The study determined that users are exposed to more narrow and niche news on social media than they would be on other outlets. This study is important to consider

because it turns the focus on the news consumers rather than news providers, a subject that is not mentioned as much in earlier articles. Furthermore, the study shows that the news individuals are consuming are articles they see through their friend networks as opposed to articles they find by visiting the homepage of the Washington Post or other news outlet. This change in media consumption could possibly point to an indication that readers rely less on the news source and more on their friends for information. This reduces the impact of the media and could reduce the impact of endorsements.

Messing et. al's (2014) study published in *Communication Research*, addresses the idea of selective exposure and how social media can change how individuals get their news. The article cites how the mainstream press, as well as Americans, is moving toward more polarized news coverage and consumption. The paper argues that stronger social endorsements increase the chance that users select information targeted to them and that simply having social endorsements lowers the variety and political selectivity of information users can select.

The article cites four hypotheses that the study will attempt to address through its experiments. The first is that partisan consumers of news content choose to read content that they believe they will agree with. The second hypothesis is that consumers of news content will use social endorsements to make selections as to what content they will watch or read. The third hypothesis states that news consumers are more likely to consider social endorsements than a partisan alignment of a news source to determine what content to read. Finally, the paper hypothesizes that mere social endorsements are more impactful than the source where a news article comes from.

To test these hypotheses, the study created a web application where individuals were prompted to choose a news story out of two "hard" categories (Business and World News) and

two “soft” categories (Sports and Entertainment). Three conditions were created for the experiment. The first condition only has the source of where the article came from under the title. The second condition listed the number of recommendations the article had under the article title. The third condition had both the source and number of recommendations. Participants were randomly put into one of the conditions. The stories were also given random partisan labels (Fox News, MSNBC and CNN).

There were multiple results from the experiment. The first is that political affiliation does play a part in what readers select. Of the 326 Democrats that were surveyed, 144 selected at least one article from Fox News and 74 of the 147 Republicans selecting at least one article from MSNBC. The study showed that Democrats were more likely to choose MSNBC articles and Republican more like to choose Fox News articles. When it came to social endorsements, individuals were more than twice as likely to choose an article that had more recommendations. When using both the source and the number of endorsements, the study showed that the number of endorsements played a larger role than the source. Overall social cues and endorsements were a much larger predictor of story selection than partisan affiliation.

While this article presents an strong study that explores how individuals value the popularity of an article, the study could have factored in that the algorithms present in social media hide some articles to begin with, so individuals would not even have to option to click on it or not. Availability is a factor that should be considered when looking at media choice through social media outlets.

The articles exploring the impact of social media address the changing news environment and how audiences now value the news shared from friends more than media outlets themselves. This idea of the changing social media landscape relates to the concept of Information Shortcuts,

where individuals use methods to reduce the amount of research necessary to reach a conclusion on an issue.

### ***Information shortcuts.***

While a lot of the previous literature mentioned above discusses whether or not endorsements are effective, the angle I'm more interested in researching is if the public and campaigns view the endorsement as a still relevant piece of writing and worth reading. When figuring out how to answer this question from a more theoretical standpoint, I came across the theory of information shortcuts. Samuel Popkin's (1991) article "Information Shortcuts and the Reasoning Voter" discusses the idea of information shortcuts during elections. In this context, Popkin defines information shortcuts as methods voters use to obtain, evaluate and store information concerning political candidates. He focuses on certain shortcuts voters may use to minimize the amount of research necessary to reach a conclusion on where they stand on a candidate. The shortcuts Popkin used are: using the opinions of others, party label, demographic traits of a candidate, judging campaign behavior, and evaluating a candidate's sincerity.

Of these criteria, it is the first example, using the opinions of others that is the most relevant to what I would like to research. Popkin used the example of a television personality as the "opinion of another," but I believe that a well-trusted newspaper could also be a fitting example. A newspaper endorsement meets the criteria of an information shortcut because it could potentially minimize the research a reader needs to conduct on a candidate. If a reader trusts their local paper, they can decide to forgo looking into a candidate and instead vote for the person their paper endorses. While Popkin's work expertly discusses the idea of information shortcuts, it does not really look into the media or endorsements. Therefore I needed to find articles that focused both on information shortcuts and the media.

An article I found that used the theory of Information Shortcuts and applied it to politics is Merolla et. al's (2008) article "Can Canadians Take a Hint? The (In) Effectiveness of Party Labels as Information Shortcuts in Canada." While this article does not apply the theory of information shortcuts to a media perspective, it does look at information shortcuts in the lens of politics. The study that Merolla et. al (2008) conducted, sought to see if Canadian citizens use the information shortcuts of political affiliation to make decisions on policy. They created several hypothesis concerning politics and information shortcuts. These were: 1) Party labels influences Canadians' opinions on political issues. 2) Partisan identifiers are more likely to report opinions in the same direction as a cue from their own party. 3) Party shortcuts will have stronger effects when the issues in question are more obtuse, and 4) The influence of the NDP (New Democratic Party) and Conservative cues are stronger than the cues of the Liberal cues.

The experiment presented subjects with policy ranging from easy to understand, to more complex. Half of the subjects were only presented the subject, while the other half received cues to where political parties stood on this issue.

The results of this experiment did not yield strong evidence to support Merolla et. al's claims. The cue of a political party's views on an issue did not necessarily sway a subject's thoughts on the matter with the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party. However, when it came to the NDP, those who identified with the party did use information shortcuts of party identification to determine their thoughts on a more complex issue. All in all, in this study, the effectiveness of the information shortcut of political party cues changes across parties and issues. However, political party cues had enough of an impact with the NDP that made the idea that the public uses information shortcuts feasible. While this particular study does not discuss the media

and media generated shortcuts, this literature is relevant to the overall topic because it addresses the idea of information theory and how it could be applied in a political standpoint.

Andrew's (2007) article "Media Generated Shortcuts: Do Newspaper Headlines Present Another Roadblock for Low-information Rationality?" looks into how this idea is applicable to news headlines as opposed to a non-media angle. In this study, Andrew looks at the news headline as an information shortcut since arguably, a reader could understand the basics of a story from simply reading the headline. The author looks at newspaper headlines during the Canadian election campaign season to see whether the headlines are accurate representations of the stories they precede. Ultimately, Andrew wants to see whether or not the information shortcuts generated by the media simplifies the stories to a point of being potentially misleading.

While analyzing the data, Andrew found that while two thirds of the stories written by newspapers about the Canadian election were about the election itself (polls, the race, etc) and not about issues, about half actual headlines focused on issues. This means that while some headlines suggested the story would be issue-oriented, it in fact was about the race. Ultimately Andrew discovered a dissonance between the information shortcut and the information itself during an election cycle. This study is relevant to the overall research on endorsements and campaigns' views on them because endorsements themselves are a form of information shortcuts. It is important to note of an instance that demonstrates the potential pitfalls with relying too heavily on media generated information shortcuts such as headlines.

Finally, a study by Diana Mutz (1992) looks into effect public opinion has on political attitudes as a whole. This article differs from all articles previously evaluated because the focus is not on newspaper endorsements, but instead on public endorsements, the study examines the "rational for theories of impersonal influence." The study evaluates the rational by discussing

political contexts, differentiating impersonal influence from other forms of influence and exploring explanations for the impersonal influence phenomenon.

Mutz states that impersonal influence could potentially affect multiple political situations. Simply the fact that the media covers politics and incorporates the opinions of voters through polls is an example. Covering the campaign itself (also known as horse race coverage) also contributes to the impact impersonal influence could have on politics. If viewers or readers are consistently looking at how other people view a candidate or an issue, it's more likely that they will be influenced by that information.

Mutz defined impersonal influence as "individuals' perceptions of the attitudes, beliefs, or experiences of diffuse others who are not known to the individual. More simply put, these are influences from strangers or "the public" as opposed to friends or family members. This takes on the form of "group identification" as opposed to individual identification.

The paper identifies multiple reasons as to why impersonal influence can be so influential. The main reason used is the "power of conformity." Individuals are more likely to do what "everyone else is doing" as opposed to championing a different perspective. Another reason that is cited is the idea of "cue-taking" where individuals have a greater response to endorsements made by individuals that are seen as trustworthy and credible. An example of this would be newspaper endorsements from papers such as *The New York Times*, which is a largely credible paper despite having some dissenters. Another explanation is that individuals are unknowingly influenced by the mere exposure of a certain candidate. A candidate who runs more ads may receive more votes just because they appear more often on a viewer's television screen. Finally, Mutz cites the mentality of supporting a frontrunner so one's vote is not "wasted" as a final example as to how impersonal influence impacts the decisions voters make.

The study used experiments involving surveys to determine the impact of impersonal influence. Overall the results of the study support the idea of public opinion as a large influencer concerning political issues. However, the study does offer caveats concerning the findings, stating that surveying people about issues could have skewed the results because the mere mentioning of an issue could impact an individual's thoughts on it if they haven't thought about it much before the survey. The second caveat Mutz mentions is that even if the issues are not described as democratic or republican to the survey takers, the takers still might know the political associations with certain stances and this knowledge could influence their answer. Overall Mutz determines that many factors, not just one, influence how an individual votes, but that impersonal influence could very well be one of those factors. This study is important to note because it broadens the idea of how citizens are influenced in politics. Not only are individuals influenced by their political beliefs and media coverage, their peers could also influence them, an idea that has become more apparent now that social media influence continues to grow.

### ***Conclusion.***

There has been extensive research on the impact of newspaper endorsements on elections. The literature also looked into the phenomenon known as a "surprise endorsement" where a newspaper that commonly endorses one party would have a greater impact on the public if they suddenly endorsed a candidate of the opposite party. Some literature looks into the influence public opinion and social media have on an individual's media consumption. While not official "endorsements," individuals do take in account the thoughts and beliefs in others when choosing what to believe or even what articles to read. These personal endorsements could be just as impactful as newspaper endorsements. Finally, pieces concerning Information Shortcut Theory, the main theory that will be used during the research component, and its influences on

both politics and the media were examined. While the literature above offers a variety of concepts surrounding endorsements, both newspaper and personal, what is lacking is how the emergence of social media could potentially make the newspaper endorsement obsolete. While previous studies indicate that endorsements do impact elections, endorsements did not make a difference in certain races of the 2016 election. The question of whether or not social media endorsements are now more effective than newspaper endorsements is a question that could possibly provide an answer as to why the 2016 election was such an exception on a national, and in some cases, a statewide level.

### **Methodology.**

While figuring out what methodology would be best for my project, I arrived at the conclusion that I would want something that is gathers qualitative data over quantitative data. The responses I am looking for will hopefully become a blueprint for other news organizations. Since I want to gather information from lawmakers, journalists, campaign managers and others, the most efficient way to gather this information would be through semi-structured interviews. In total, I intend to interview no more than ten individuals through this methodology. In addition to taking notes, I would also prefer to record said interviews for accuracy.

I intend to ask open-ended questions that revolve around the ideas of endorsements, journalistic impact and social media, since these are the themes that appear the most throughout my preliminary research. Other qualitative data I would like to gather would be to look at past endorsements of the papers I plan to look into. I would like to look at endorsements from the 2008 election to the 2016 election.

Since this project has a statewide focus as opposed to a national focus, the research component will look at the endorsements in three Missouri towns and interview individuals

involved with those endorsements. The Missouri cities/towns I have decided to examine in my research are St. Louis, Columbia and Warrenton. While I was very tempted to select St. Joseph, Missouri as my last Missouri town, considering it was one of the few newspapers to endorse Trump, I was focusing on state elections. I decided instead to choose the smaller town of Warrenton. To evenly break up my interviews, each city/town will hopefully each get three interviews.

For each city, I intend to look at the endorsements from a local paper. The papers I have chosen are *the St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Columbia Daily Tribune*, and the *Warren County Record*. I hope to interview the editors of each paper as the first set of my semi-structured interviews.

Secondly, in Warren County and Boone County, I will look into which lawmakers were recently elected and try to talk to them and additionally, talk to their campaign managers or advisor for the second set of interviews for these areas.

For my second St. Louis interview, I know I want to focus on the gubernatorial race. While I know it would be very unlikely I could get an audience with Governor Greitens, I hope to get in contact with former campaign staff or a political consultant who helped on the campaign.

Finally, to get a non-journalistic, non-political perspective, I intend on interviewing a political scientist on the University of Missouri campus. I also hope to interview someone, mostly likely in Jefferson City, who can give me a past perspective that extends beyond just the 2016 election, arguably at least ten years into the past.

Semi-structured interviews involve open-ended questions that allow the subject to offer detailed answers. As with any interview, I plan on asking more questions and follow up

questions in response to the interviewee's answers. Since the subjects I will be interviewing are not all in the same background professionally, I will need to create at least two sets of questions: one for journalists, and one for those involved with the campaign. Naturally some of those questions will overlap.

In the end, the responses will be recorded and compared to each other to determine if there is a clear answer as to whether or not it is worth it to continue the practice of the endorsement.

While most of the data I will be gathering, will be qualitative data, it serves the interest of my project to gather some quantitative data as well. This data would include: the populations of St. Louis, Columbia, and Warrenton, the circulation of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Columbia Tribune* and the *Warren County Record*, and looking at the number page views the endorsements of these papers receive. It would also benefit to look at the social media presence of these papers, in terms of followers, likes etc. Looking at the engagement between these papers and their readers could give me a scope of how impactful these papers are, which could also sway the influence of their endorsements.

### **Publication outlets.**

I believe that the research I am conducting would be beneficial to newsrooms across the country and across the globe. In particular, I think journalists covering the politics beat would find my findings either informative or interesting. When searching for potential publications, I looked for journals that were a general journalism focus, and journals that were politics and journalism focused. In the end, I believe the research component of my project could be publishable in Poynter, Nieman Reports and the International Journal of Press/Politics.

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## Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

*Interview with Steve Booher: Tuesday, March 20, 2018*

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah okay if you want to just start by telling me your name and what it is you do.

**Steve Booher:**

Okay, my name is Steve Booher and for the next two weeks, I am the news director for the NPG newspaper and television. Then as of April first, I'll assume the role of director of news strategy for the same company.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Oh wow, well I'm glad I caught you now

**Steve Booher:**

Yeah

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is, how much do you believe campaign value the endorsement of the press?

**Steve Booher:**

Well... how much do campaigns value?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yes

**Steve Booher:**

Well I think they do. To, you know, on a scale of 1 – 10, I think maybe a six or seven. Sometimes they act like it doesn't matter to them, but at the same point and time we continually, have candidates who are asking if we are going to endorse and if we are, are we going to endorse them. So I think it's important to the campaign. It's one more feather in their cap, one more pull-up line they can put on campaign literature.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that changes the larger or smaller the election is? A governorship versus, you know, a city councilmember or a state senator?

**Steve Booher:**

I think the smaller it is, kinda the more important it becomes. You know, statewide offices, you have not only us but other papers and TV stations. Newspapers in particular are the ones that endorse candidates. So you have Springfield, you have St Louis you have Kansas City. And so were just kind of one of ten newspapers that may endorse a candidate but the closer you get to the local level, then more important it becomes

because in Buchanan County or northwest Missouri for instance, there may be only one newspaper that will endorse candidates and so your endorsement means a little bit just because there's not so many of 'em.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So how much effort do you think campaigns focus on getting an endorsement?

**Steve Booher:**

They'll usually have someone on their campaign staff will approach us and they'll want to know if we endorsed and are we going to endorse in a particular race, and if we are, then they'll always inquire about, what the procedure is what does their candidate need to do.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Over time, do you think there has been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for endorsements or coverage?

**Steve Booher:**

Oh absolutely. Yeah, I've been at this for several decades and I can remember back in the 90s and 2000s where candidates would come in specifically to meet with an editorial board of a newspaper and solicit that endorsement from the newspaper. Now, I think it's, you know, it's more important for them to be really nimble on social media and get their message out through social media rather than ask for an endorsement and I think that, you know, here recently with Trump's fake news message that he seems to be spouting on a regular basis. I think it has fostered some distrust in the media particularly in newspapers and so, maybe the endorsement isn't, you know, quite as, appealing as what it used to be.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

What has caused this shift, you think?

**Steve Booher:**

I think it's...younger voters. I think older, more established voters, they read newspapers. They have a lot more faith in newspapers. Young people, you know, they don't migrate to newspapers necessarily to get their news and so I don't think there's as much faith in what a newspaper has to say or what a newspaper has to recommend. And I have read a lot of surveys where Millennials don't want to be told what to think anyway, That they reject that and so I think all those things sort of play a factor and the, you know, the significance of endorsements kind of being eroded in the last two elections.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, kind of talking along the lines of social media, is there appeal in connecting to voters directly and getting endorsements from the public on social media as opposed to a newspaper endorsement.

**Steve Booher:**

Well, probably. With social media, for the most part you can control the message. You know, if you interview with a newspaper editorial board or even with a reporter. You can't just say what you want. Your comments are going to be vetted and your comments are going to be verified. And, you know on social media, none of that necessarily happens. Now you do have people who will comment and you know, just the masses will kind of, you know, tell you whether or not, you know, that's the right thing to do or not. But for the most part, if you're a candidate, you get the first shot at getting your message across and it's unedited and it's unfiltered through a trusted news source. And a lot of times, the first post is what wins the day. Everybody will read the post and nobody will read too far down in the comments.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah. So timeliness may be a factor as well...

**Steve Booher:**

Yeah. In addition to that, you know we're gonna, if we endorse a candidate, we're gonna write an editorial that appears in our newspaper that tells our readers who we are endorsing and why. And we're gonna run that once. And it's probably going to be on a Sunday. You keep reposting your endorsements on social media as many times as you want. I mean eventually, Facebook's algorithm will sort of penalize you for doing that, but, you know, I mean if you get an endorsement and post it immediately and then the next week or two weeks hit it again and then as it gets closer to the election, hit it again. So you get a lot more at bats than you do with a newspaper which prints it once and that's pretty much it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you think is more influential in elections, newspaper endorsements or endorsements from people that you know, whether it's in person or on social media.

**Steve Booher:**

Actually, I think that newspaper endorsements are more important because you know theoretically you have an objective source who thinks about things, who will talk to both sides and will arrive at a decision that are deliberately about who they are going to endorse. Social media, you know, it's very easy just to get on Facebook and say I endorse this candidate and a lot of it, then will also depend, you know, if for instance, northwest Missouri, if Sam Graves get the New Press' endorsement that's one thing, but what might be equal to that or about the same is if another congressman in Missouri endorses him and puts that on social media. So it kind of depends upon who's posting that social media stuff. On the other hand if Joe the plumber, you know, gets on there and he endorses Sam Graves, I don't know how much weight that carries.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I'm exploring the idea of newspapers being more, you know, I think definitely more informed decision versus you know, your friend but... which do you think is more influential, someone, if you know and trust somebody versus a newspaper.

**Steve Booher:**

So, basically what you're asking is, if you have a really good friend who knows you thick and thin together who goes out on their Facebook feed and says hey you know what, I'm gonna vote for Eric Greitens... Does that person's weight carry more than a newspaper endorsement? Is that what you're asking?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, kind of.

**Steve Booher:**

You know...gosh.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

It's a hard question I know. I've been getting that response a lot.

**Steve Booher:**

Well, you know, here's what I think maybe. And this probably isn't the answer the most journalists would like me to say but, but probably the friend that you trust, You know, I mean, you don't know, most items that are run on an editorial page in the newspaper, do not have bylines. Unless it's a column or something like that, but, nobody really knows who's making those decisions. It is like the editorial or some, you know, nameless faceless editor who happens to be writing the opinion page that day. Whereas your friend, you know, you trust. That's how he carries more weight and what's maybe the perfect scenario is the newspaper endorses a candidate and then your friend grabs that link and that post and shares it on his feed and says, you no I agree with this exactly, you know, that would probably be more traction than just one or the other.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, that makes sense. So you kind of led to my next question, which is the idea of, so the main theory of my project is, kind of the idea that people look for ways information is condensed and then therefore understood more easily. It's called public information shortcut theory. And so the endorsement is an example of a shortcut as it condenses what the paper believes are the points of a campaign that make it acceptable? for listeners/readers. So are there, including endorsements, are there information shortcuts that could be viewed as useful to campaigns?

**Steve Booher:**

I think there are. Are you talking like newspaper shortcuts or,

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, it could be shortcuts, it could be, one of the, the senator I interviewed, state senator talked about, not really attack ads, but fine points on issues that zero in on one aspect of that issue, just things that condense issues for voters.

**Steve Booher:**

Yeah, I think that's what we're going for. Because, you know, on the web, most people's attention span is not as long as it was twenty years ago or forty years ago and they don't really care for the back room maneuvering. They don't care about really breaking down and drilling deep into an issue. They care about a quick fact of, how should I feel about this. And you get people on Facebook down that are telling them, here's how you should feel and, you know, you have newspapers who do it, but you kind of got to work for that information a little bit. You have to pick up the paper, you have to read it, you know, if it's a complicated issue, you may have to read it a couple of times and I think that that's probably making voters work too hard and that, you know, we I think like 15 or 20 years ago we used to talk about releasing information on what they called snackable bites. And, you know, it was like one fact, one post, one fact one story, stuff like that and what it was intended to do was sort of spoon feed readers and users the information, but not give them whole thing at once.

And they would understand it better, maybe retain it better but it's kind of tough to do that a little bit and I don't know how successful, you know, even TV stations have been at doing that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah. So it sounds like you guys have been doing shortcuts way way before even social media. Just finding ways to make it very accessible.

**Steve Booher:**

Right, and sort of now we kinda do the same thing with our web strategy, you know, we'll post an initial story at maybe three paragraphs or just maybe three sentences and then we, you know, we publish it and then we alert people through social media and mobile app pushes and stuff that it's on the web. And then we go through and we update it with more information or with a piece of video or with a still photo and they we update again or I'm sorry, alert people again, and it kind of runs through that cycle. And so, you know, in this day and age, yeah, smaller and simpler is often more effective than bigger and ponderous and complicated.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

If candidates, maybe if they don't see a value in newspaper endorsements as they used to, how should journalists or editorial boards change their practices and policies to adapt to this new system where politicians have more options of getting news out.

**Steve Booher:**

Well, number one I think we should continue to do endorsements because I think they are important and I think they do influence people. I don't know if they influence as many as they used to, you know, decades ago, but I think we should continue to endorse candidates. I think that what we should do is maybe change they way they are presented. In a newspaper, you're going to have that big editorial that says here's who we're endorsing for the upcoming election. But I think on the web and on social media you have an opportunity to break that up into small or smaller facts and post those and then keep posting them and instead of one big huge release, it's scheduled and consistent

across your website and on social media. And I think that you'll reach more people, but I think no matter how it goes, I think newspapers need to continue to do that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

One second, I'm typing.

**Steve Booher:**

That's fine. I've interviewed, before too with a report with a laptop open so...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay and then do you believe that the relationship between the media and politicians has changed as the way that users consume media has also changed.

**Steve Booher:**

You know, I think there's...I think it has changed. It's still sort of symbiotic, I mean really they need us because we go cover their campaign events and, you know, we cover their debates. Whenever they issue press releases or statements we know that when we cover the news when that happens, but I think that you know it's changed a little bit in that maybe politicians need us less than what they did a few decades ago because, you know, social media does give them the power to control the message. I think everybody thought as soon as Donald Trump got elected president he would stop tweeting. In fact I think a lot of people prayed for him to stop tweeting, but he hasn't done it and the reason he does that is, he feels like he's controlling the message. And I guess he is to a certain extent, If you're a Donald Trump fan and you like his tweet.. If you're not a Donald Trump fan, it gets to be annoying, and so I think it has changed. I think politicians may need us less these days than what they did back when newspapers were about the only way you could get your message out to a mass numbers of people.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And you kind of touched on this, there's a part to but it's mainly, does this make the media more or less relevant or influential to politicians.

**Steve Booher:**

Yeah I think we're less relevant. The politicians, you know, I am not ready to give up on readers and users yet. I think we still matter to some and I think the, you know, the way we conduct ourselves as far as doing endorsements, I think we can actually matter more to readers and users than what we do now. Especially if we are, you know, willing to be interactive and put our opinion out there, but then solicit your opinion and what did you think and so on and so forth.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there anything that I have not asked that you thought I was going to ask on the topic?

**Steve Booher:**

Um...no. I think just, from your reactions to answers and stuff like that, (inaudible) handle on sort of what the state of journalism in the face of,

you know, websites and social media and stuff like that I think you're probably, know that you probably have a good handle on what that situation is now. And you know a lot of journalists don't like it and you know a lot of are saying, you know jeez, I'm getting this really expensive degree here and I'm going to have student loan payments, so don't tell me what I'm doing is insignificant. And it's not insignificant, you know, I mean newspapers and the media have a future. How much of a future depends on how well they do their job.

*Interview with Representative Pat Conway: Tuesday, March 13, 2018*

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if you just want to tell me your name and your profession, what you do.

**Pat Conway:**

Pat Conway and I am a state legislator.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And for what district?

**Pat Conway:**

District 10

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which represents what area?

**Pat Conway:**

It's Buchanan county and pretty much the, probably the inner city of, the old urban area of Saint Joseph.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is how much do you believe campaigns value the endorsements of the press?

**Pat Conway:**

I think it's not nearly as significant as it was thirty some years ago or when I first got into politics. I think with, readership, readers. people going to other areas to get their news that, it's probably, certainly affected the ability of a newspaper or institution to have the support that they may have had in previous decades.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So how much effort did your campaign or in any campaign do focus on getting endorsements?

**Pat Conway:**

Well I think a lot of times it's the decision of the newspaper whether they're going to endorse. Now our local newspaper usually had a policy that they didn't endorse in primaries. But there were other times when they chose that they didn't want to endorse in certain races but they would endorse another races so I think the burden is more on the newspaper than it is the candidate.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think, and you've kind of mentioned this a little bit already, do you think there's been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for political coverage and if so where has that shift gone?

**Pat Conway:**

Well I think there's two shifts. I think the shift itself and that people are going to social media. Whether it be Twitter or Facebook, or different media sites that are on the internet whether they be specific like Politico or other groups that they're getting their news from. So I think that's a big shift. I think the other show is the fact that I think a large a higher percentage of people have withdrawn themselves from the public debate on issues and I don't know that either social media or the news press, newspaper can reach those people.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And why do you think there is a difficulty in reaching people?

**Pat Conway:**

Well I think to a certain extent I think they're overwhelmed by information. It's so difficult to sort out the information that you do get, whether it's coming from a reliable source of non-reliable source. Whether there's a prejudice by the organization that's distributing the news. Where, and that's most often the case in many areas subjects that you get into that certain interest groups provide the information to enhance our own position. I don't know how you get to a lot of people who are, just kind of walked away from the situation and then have a tendency unless they have a personal relationship, the incline to vote.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there an appeal to connecting to voters directly and getting endorsements from the public on social media versus a newspaper endorsement?

**Pat Conway:**

I think the newspaper endorsement is more credible. I think the individual endorsements that you get via Facebook or other social media. I mean they will, be directly related to us, percentage of people who are interested in that candidate. So a lot of times you're not going to change the outcome of the decision, you're just gonna verify that they're supporting a specific candidate.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you think it's kind of more influential to people in elections: newspapers endorsements or an endorsement from somebody that they know.

**Pat Conway:**

Well I think in a smaller market like ourselves it is determined by the readers faith, in the newspaper itself. (\*Break where Conway votes\*)

**Pat Conway:**

You know sometimes I actually believe that an endorsement of a candidate by a newspaper might even get the candidates some negative votes. I would think for the most part it would be a positive, but I think if people don't have faith in the newspaper itself and if they endorse someone, they might just vote against that individual.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So the main theory in my project is called information shortcut theory, which is more or less the idea that people look for ways that information is content so they don't have to do as much work to find answers for things that they're interested in. A good example of that is a newspaper headlines and that they can read the headline and kind of get the gist of the story without reading it.

So are there ways that information shortcuts that could be viewed as useful to campaigns.

**Pat Conway:**

I'm not sure that, you know I've always had a theory on, that often the journalists doesn't write the headline. And the headline tends to reflect what you're going to be interested in that subject and if you're all going to get to page 7A for the second part of the story. And so the shortcuts tend to make you make a quick decision on what the final outcome of the story is and if you know, if you're not going to read the whole story then you're not going to have the whole set of information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I think, I went a little too specific. So I'm saying like, so endorsements are also an examples of information shortcuts. So it's just ways that information can be condensed to be easily digested I guess. So are there ways that information shortcuts can be viewed as useful to campaigns in general?

**Pat Conway:**

I'm not sure I'm following you all the way. Let's try it again.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, for example, if someone is wanting to figure out who they want to vote for, they can go through, like if they were going on your website, looking at all your policies, they could look at all your policies and I think you're worth voting for. Or they can go to their local newspapers, and see who they're endorsing, see all of that information really in one smaller blub and say, oh this is kind of what it's saying, you know. It's basically making information easier and faster to understand so that's what I'm getting at.

**Pat Conway:**

Yeah, I mean it's hard to get... I mean you can have... Politicians can put out that I'm pro-family, but that really doesn't tell you anything so from that standpoint the journalists can probably offer better information than you can get by other shortcuts. And I think it's, but then the journalists and the headline writer got to be on the same page in order to get people to absorb the information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

If political campaigns or candidates such as your yourself, or politicians don't really see a value in newspaper endorsements as they once did, how should journalists change their policies to adapt to that new outlook.

**Pat Conway:**

Well, often to me, it's not necessarily the journalist who writes the story that can make the determination of what the endorsement or the board or the editorial page editors or the commentators should make the final decision on the endorsement. So I've seen over my years many of times where the individual reporter would be supportive of a candidate in the endorsement doesn't come out for that candidate. So it's kind of, you know, I think a lot of times that the endorsements anymore reflect the political philosophy of the newspaper rather than the necessary facts to the individual candidates.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe that journalists, or newspapers in general should even do endorsements anymore?

**Pat Conway:**

You know I could, I think there is some merit to that. I think if you're marketing a newspaper, you want it to be reflective of all the individuals who are subscribers and so it may, whether it's...unless there's a specific reason to endorse a candidate....I think stories written that reflect a bad aspect of a candidate sometimes are even better than an endorsement.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe is the relationship between the media and politicians has changed as the way users consume media has also changed?

**Pat Conway:**

Yeah, it's changed a hundred percent from forty years ago. You know, the fact that there's no privilege between journalists and the candidates or politicians, there's, some of the younger journalists, not you, but I mean, you know I've been interviewed on a phone conversation not even been informed that I was being taped. You know, sometimes you'll be in a conversation and this is with social media too that you don't even know that the individual you're talking to is, I'll use the term loosely a journalist. And then that becomes a, not necessarily in the newspaper, but on social media or twitter or wherever, to have a negative effect. So, you know, there's a lot more traps out there for people who are in the political arena than there was thirty or forty years ago.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so do you think this makes the media, more or less relevant or influential to politicians.

**Pat Conway:**

I think now that you're seeing politicians that are avoiding the media and going directly to the voters whether it be through social media or as a result of just doing door to door one on one contacts with potential voters and I think they're circumventing the media part. Let's go push a button.

(\*Break where Conway votes\*)

**Sarah Kellogg:**

How convenient that your desk is right there!

**Pat Conway:**

Yeah, you gotta be the senior person in the body to get that one.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So those were the rest of my formal questions. Is there anything else that you want to talk about the topic that I haven't asked.

**Pat Conway:**

No. I think you had some pretty good questions.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is, just say your name and what you do please.

**James Endersby:**

James Endersby I teach political science at the University of Missouri

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay so my first question is how much you believe campaigns value the endorsement of the press.

**James Endersby:**

I think endorsements have very little impact to be honest. In your original question you asked are they an asset, yeah of course they are an asset but I think actually have little overall effect.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And why would they be an asset?

**James Endersby:**

They're an asset because it shows that there is some support for the candidact it shows a demonstration of viability of the political candidacy. Particularly early on we may talk about different types of candidates later, but it shows the viability of their candidate for winning the election or doing well in the election so they're a marker of that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah so talking about different candidates are you talking more like national versus local or...

**James Endersby:**

That's where I didn't know how far you wanted to get into it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

We can go into it right now so do you think it's more impactful for a local, verses national.

**James Endersby:**

Yeah, it's more impactful for local. For presidential candidates for instance we all sort of know where the endorsements are gonna fall democratic papers or news organizations are going to have to endorse or editorial, democratic editorial boards are going to endorse democratic candidates and likewise for republicans since it's all more kind of pro forma more than anything else. When it gets down to local candidates or small campaigns, or low information campaigns might be a better way of thinking about it, that's where they might start to have more of an impact there because the campaigns themselves have a

more difficult time even demonstrating viability. If you think for a nonpartisan race for instance to get us straight to it, there's not, when you don't have a party label on the ballot, if you don't have a recognized incumbent or something you sort of the campaign needs to show that there is a real viable candidate behind there and that's where they may have a greater impact. Is it a huge impact? No, but on the other hand for those races you also have relatively low turnouts there aren't that many voters that are voting in the election the voters that are participating tend to be those people who have higher consumption of information which means they may read a newspaper or the like and then the newspapers making some kind of position on that race. So that's where it can make more of a difference, is when there's a less information campaign does that matter for the US senator or the presidency no probably not.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so do you think there's probably then a greater effort for campaigns to focus on getting endorsements the smaller the race or you think like, how much effort do you think campaigns value on seeking that endorsement.

**James Endersby:**

Yeah, I know, it's hard for me to...you know, I'm not aware of campaigns really that seek the endorsement I mean it's you know again it's sort of assumed if you're...have a democratic editorial board the assumptions are gonna endorse the democratic candidate.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah because one example, I'm looking more state wide and smaller verses national and, you know, one of the great examples I have is, you know, our governor and how he went to the editorial board of the primary but he didn't during the general.

**James Endersby:**

Right in the primary campaign, he set his campaign out as a viable winnable campaign he's a winnable candidate and that's where he needs to try to get some kind of recognition that there's a real race here, that he can win, you know..

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah so do that earlier on when you would want that.

**James Endersby:**

If you think back to the Republican primary, not many editorial boards were endorsing at the time of the Republican presidential primaries but that's the stage where they can have a bigger impact, you know, where among roughly equivalent of candidates and the minds of the voters can you make an impact.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Has there been a shift in focus, kind of, away from relying on the press for coverage like with campaigns or...

**James Endersby:**

To some extent...well the advantage of endorsements is it's free press and generally positive press for the candidate, for the campaign that is getting endorsed. I don't know if...you always want free press that's the that's the thing but you also generally speaking in this visual age, you also want images that are distributed in the press. Sorry radio (laughs), but if you can get pictures of your candidates, like, that's more important than what they're saying in the background.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that there is kind of a shift away from relying on news outlets and instead kind of focusing toward social media or going your own route is to getting your name out there instead of relying on the press.

**James Endersby:**

Well social media certainly is something else that I don't think the way that although there's a trend toward social media, I don't know we really know what the impact is at this point. Again you're talking primarily like-minded folks, so if you're a Republican candidate get your name on social media because you're linking to other Republicans, people that are like-minded, and the same for the Democrats so it's unclear whether you're sort of breaking out into the more general market whereas that's the advantage of the press, it is, although there certainly are partisan orientations to the present and partisan orientation to the viewers of different forms or organization still, there's a residual out there too. So getting news coverage of news attention that's good any campaign barring a huge scandal, photographs.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

-Joking- I have no idea what you're talking about.

**James Endersby:**

Well, whatever that could be, barring those kind of things, generally speaking the more attention the campaign, it is perceived by the voters as being a more viable campaign, a campaign I should pay attention to.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe that there is an appeal for candidates to connect to voters directly through social media, Twitter, and getting endorsements from like the public as opposed to the newspaper endorsement.

**James Endersby:**

Well you have to, yeah you have to pursue both strategies. You need some kind of media campaign to really, any level of race, even if it's putting up yard signs and trying to get on the local radio, but the same time you have some kind of face to face contact for all these campaigns, that's where it's more effective. For instance, not that it's the best example, but Trump going out and meeting voters face to face in these largely partisan arenas, that was important for him to excite his base, but also got a lot of news coverage of him reaching out to his base which is all reinforcing kind of think too, but even for a

presidential level it's mingling with the voters and getting out there and that serves both types of functions. You're doing a face to face relationships with voters which then that carries on, on through information networks, but it also attracts more media coverage too.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And why do you believe that maybe, just having the person to person, like having the person there would attract media coverage...

**James Endersby:**

Yeah, there's something to cover, something that's said something that's to be seen.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

What do you believe is more influential in elections, the newspaper endorsement or endorsements from somebody that you personally know.

**James Endersby:**

That's a really good question. That is a really good question. Social networks versus media and I would lean towards social networks, but the research is actually a little vague on that because it's hard to identify among our social networks, who we actually pay attention to. But generally, people vote the same way with the people that they are in contact with partly because they tend to be the same ideology they tend to be the same partisanship, so we're all sort of in it together we're all passing the same ideas around. But at same time we're also generally in a social network consuming the same kind of news. We're sharing the same kind of news.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah and that was kind of related to what I was saying is that we're at a phase now with technology, that we're always connected and so it kind of has that... increased the influence of people even more you think, than media?

**James Endersby:**

It's hard to say. I don't think the research is as yet has parsed that out yet.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah so the main the theory that I'm looking for in this research element and of my project is that information shortcut theory.

**James Endersby:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so, are their information shortcuts that can be useful to campaigns such as endorsements or anything else similar?

**James Endersby:**

Well even if you just look at a campaign website for a candidate it's gonna list what news organizations have endorsed them, but it's also gonna list what interest groups have endorsed them. It's a way of defining what the campaign is I think there is a flip side to look at it is this is also the candidates that are endorsed, the campaigns that are endorsed is also away of the journalistic organization to define where it is so that they, the Chicago Tribune and the Springfield News Leader are endorsing Republican candidates. Although in the case of the Tribune, most of its readers are Democrats. At the Sun Times and the Post Dispatch, they are endorsing democratic candidates. I mean this is just what you expect, if there's a flip in the endorsement, where a typically democratic news organization...let me rephrase that, a news organization that typically endorses democratic candidates were to endorse a republican candidate then that sort of brings in more prominence.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

When I did my review I've found some studies that would talk about the surprise endorsement and like, the effectiveness of that.

**James Endersby:**

Yeah. But is Fox News gonna come out and say vote for Hillary Clinton now? I don't, or MSNBC gonna say Donald Trump has a lot of positive - no it's just not going to happen.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So are there ways that, with talking about information shortcuts, they can be campaign websites, endorsements, you know, even news headlines are there ways that that would backfire in the face of a campaign do you think?

**James Endersby:**

It depends on how broad you think. Certainly, I don't know, the KKK has some...news outlet, I don't know what it is. Do you want that endorsement? You probably wouldn't put it on your campaign website, wouldn't want to draw a lot of attention to that and so there are probably things like that, I can imagine if, well, if Donald Trump was endorsed by the New York times, which is not going to happen, but you know, take an extreme case would the campaign really want to publicize that? I don't know it all depends on how they would spin that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah and do information shortcuts in general, do you think leads to like a decrease in candidacy literacy or even like media literacy when it comes to like being well versed on the issues or does it, balance out because you still are reading issues, just not as detailed?

**James Endersby:**

Yeah that's why I said information shortcut, it's more just demonstrating cognitive consistency and everything's lining up the way I think it should, I don't have to pay a whole lot of attention to the issues and campaign.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

If candidates don't see a value in newspaper endorsements or even really journalism as they once did, how should journalists change their, in your opinion, how should journalists change their practices and policies to adapt to that political system.

**James Endersby:**

Now I'd modify that a little bit because if you're talking about the state treasurer or state auditor, that's where that provides, a way to provide... a way to get information to voters about the campaign it establishes viability, but the endorsement is also going to provide a little bit more information too.

And so that, but they also don't have huge media, well typically at least, don't have huge media campaigns I guess the attorney general's sources race last time did, but most the times they don't have a huge media output. So that's where the endorsements and any kind of free media coverage is better for the campaign to get the issues out there...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah.

**James Endersby:**

Now to get back to your question, what should newspapers do? Probably do more explanation of why there's an endorsement. And I think most of the time, if you think about local papers, probably they do that more often, we just don't really think much about it because it'll be for a local race or you know, why endorse a county auditor, a state auditor candidate or a state treasurer, there's probably some more information about why in there that we're, we probably just don't even process, really it just, it's just information sort of consumed about whether I should vote for that candidate or not.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Should journalists change any other practices when it comes to covering campaigns, not even looking maybe past endorsement and just like...

**James Endersby:**

Oh change the coverage yes, get off the horse race. That's what most of the news coverage is, is who's ahead who's behind, what are the scandals and all that and scandals may be important but for the most part get off, that get on to what are the candidates actually saying because almost all these campaigns really do have an issue focus. There is a reason why the candidate is ? an election campaign and that's very rarely covered and, yeah that's where I would put more emphasis for the news media is covering the actual issues.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And do you believe that the relationship between the media and politicians has changed as the way that users consume media has also changed?

**James Endersby:**

You had a lot of steps in there, can you say that again?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah. So has the relationship between like politicians and the media, has that changed as the way that users consume media has also evolved, like you know since most readers, now they can get their information through social media through direct through the candidate or through the new source like has that changed the relationship between politicians and journalists, do you think?

**James Endersby:**

If I understand your question, probably so because as the news coverage focuses more on surface issues, the candidates are likely to respond by only giving surface reasons.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Another way of saying is for example, our current governor a lot of times he'll do news conferences directly on Facebook, he won't actually have press conferences and he'll just a share his issues, do you think that that has changed how media can cover him or even just the relationship between that.

**James Endersby:**

Well I said backat the primary stage, I wouldn't talk about the Greitens campaign because the First Lady is in our department, but

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Out yeah, you don't have to talk about the campaign.

**James Endersby:**

It ended up being a very wise decision on my part...Um. Yeah to use, yeah I think that I think there's the case that politicians, political candidates often becomes more remote cause they're less interest in getting into the details because it's only, particularly in the area with current technology and everything is recorded, so you use the phrase "legitimate rape" I don't know what Todd Aiken actually meant by that phrase but he probably didn't mean the way got spun out of control. So it's best just not to not to talk about things because some minor little thing you can say can get blown out of proportion so it's better just to stay on the surface of issues that don't really tell you much about what positions the candidates are.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so does this make the media like more or less relevant to politicians that they can circumvent?

**James Endersby:**

I don't know the answer to that question because there's only the coverage is still because you need to show that you have a viable campaign in the election so you need the coverage, but enables you...it's all you need is the coverage so.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Should newspapers continue the practice of endorsements?

**James Endersby:**

I don't know that it really matters because the newspaper readership is declining.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Care to elaborate a little more?

**James Endersby:**

At this point in time for reasons I can tell you most broadcast organizations don't engage an endorsement. With the declining newspaper readership I just don't know why it really matters.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Anything else you'd like to add on this topic that I haven't asked?

**James Endersby:**

No I think we pretty much covered it I mean when there's a low information environment then it's possible that newspapers and other news organization endorsements matter, most the time they don't seem to matter. I mean that's where, I mean you mentioned literature on surprise that's but that's almost creating a news item itself, when you're endorsing a candidate that's... you're creating news. But newspapers aren't supposed to do that right?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah that's what kind of, sparked my interest in this topic in the first place was looking at Clinton's endorsements versus Trump's endorsements and then and I know she got the surprise one in Arizona and then USA today issuing a non-endorsement, like they don't endorse, but they did a non-endorsement and so that kind of piqued my curiosity and then again not whether or not they're actually effective of whether or not even politicians think they matter anymore so that's kind of, what got into my thought of today's society...

**James Endersby:**

Well editor and publisher used to have that addition of which newspapers endorse which guy, I don't think they do that anymore do they?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I don't know.

**James Endersby:**

They did, up to about 2000 or so and then I think they just stopped even compiling it, it just doesn't matter.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, and it brings up the idea of another thing that I kind of like looking at is just the change of how lots of news consumers or people who feel that newspapers are bias and when they have their editorial section anyway and it's all under one banner and they're

not distant enough, then to the even continue to confuse people by endorsing that's like another thought that I've been thinking with this.

**James Endersby:**

When you know, two or more newspaper towns, Chicago still, then maybe it makes some sense to do some endorsement When there's only one newspaper all you're doing is alienating somebody so I don't see the economic model that require that on the other hand the news organizations is defining itself in some way.

*Interview with Representative Kip Kendrick: Tuesday, March 13, 2018*

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if you want to first, say your name for me and your profession

**Kip Kendrick:**

Great. Kip Kendrick, I'm the state represented for the 45th district in Missouri.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And where is that.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah, so it represents Columbia, parts of Colombia and a little bit of Boone, little bit outside the city limits of Boone County.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is, how much do you think your campaign or campaigns in general value endorsements from the press?

**Kip Kendrick:**

I value them and I mean and I haven't even had necessarily a competitive race. You know in, my first election I ran completely unopposed. This last election I had an independent file against me, but it still, I mean it's critical, in my opinion to get the endorsements of any, any press outlets who puts out, is reputable puts out endorsements to continue to build name ID and I know people in, you know, in competitive districts I, I would assume that all of them value it, pretty substantially.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so then how much effort, did your campaign..do you think, how much do campaigns focus on getting those endorsements.

**Kip Kendrick:**

So, again, my case is a little bit different just because I ran unopposed so I was able to you know that I was able to kind of focus on just building my name recognition and really getting out in my first election, quote unquote election, but just getting out and doing listening sessions, getting to know everyone and at least, you know, business leaders and organization leaders and important people within the district and knocking on doors also and just trying to build a reputation of being accessible and you would hope that the press catches on to that, that you're treating it seriously so it just, I was less focused on how I could specifically get the endorsement during my, during that time period and more focused on just building a good rapport within the district and hopefully that reflects, reflects an endorsement at that time. I will say that...One time in particular where I filed a bill a couple years ago, well actually last session, an ethics bill that Hank Waters called me out on in an editorial and I value his opinion so much and his editorials that I, you know, after he put out the editorial, I called him to talk to him about it. We went and had lunch and talked through it I explained the purpose, you know, why I filed

the legislation and try to give him a backstory that didn't necessarily, you know, wasn't just reflected in the bill being filed so you know I valued his opinion enough to like, "Ho!" I need to smooth over this, to make sure that he knows why I did this and so yeah yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I'm actually interviewing Hank on Friday

**-Crosstalk-**

**Kip Kendrick:**

I mean, it was it was that important to me right? Like I saw something, potentially negative written about me, not written me about personally but, but the bill, and I was like you know I need to make sure he understands my train of thought on it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think there, has there been a shift in focus, kind of away, from relying on the press for coverage?

**Kip Kendrick:**

-Laughs- Over the last year and a half, yeah. I mean it seems like it right? I mean it does seem...I think, unfortunately. Especially with the governor's, the governor's race here in Missouri and the presidential race I think both of the gentlemen who won really tried to close down access to the press and tried to, you know, focus on getting their message out on social media, and speaking what they said, speaking directly to the people without going through press and I think that, I hope that, that is a bit of an anomaly. I hope that we get away from that future, but I think it set, I'm a bit concerned with the direction we may be headed in that aspect.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, and kind of very related, is there an appeal to connecting kind of, to voters directly and getting endorsements from the public on social media as opposed to going through the press?

**Kip Kendrick:**

I think, I mean I use social media, I don't post as often as I should, but I do use Facebook. I use Twitter. I send out a newsletter, you know, I try to connect with individuals as much as I can directly, but I mean it's also important, I mean the press are critical in telling the stories and telling the narratives of what's happening in the building and why things are happening. And so, you know I, I try to be as accessible as I can to the press and I think a lot of my colleagues down here do as well. So...What, what, I'm sorry I lost track of the question...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there that appeal to connecting to voters you know through a campaign as opposed to going through the press to get out your message or seeking an endorsement. Do you think

there is an appeal to just going directly to the people that are going to vote for you, potentially?

**Kip Kendrick:**

I think, I mean there is an appeal right? I mean it, you can control your message obviously, I think that was the intent. I know I would assume of the governor and of the presidential race and of individuals who speak more directly to, rather in seeking an endorsement, you can control it, but at the same time it's like, you don't...you have to put out the effort to earn the trust of individuals and I think, you know, any fair minded editorial board or anyone who's gonna put out an endorsement, if you have their trust and if they see that you're committed to serving the public I feel like than you can, that's how you earn the endorsement I don't necessarily think you earn the endorsement by anything nefarious that you do and so...yeah I, both are important.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And what do you think, kind of in today's society, as things have changed, like what do you think is kind of more influential in elections, newspaper endorsements or interesting from somebody that that you know.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Huh.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

It's kind of a tough question

**Kip Kendrick:**

That is tough question. I think, I mean, I think the personal endorsements are good especially in small races, but I think... I still think the press endorsements for me from newspapers are critical. In that you reach people who, you don't necessarily know or you haven't hit their door or they may not know the individual who is on your endorsement list, you know. I know that we often try to gain endorsements of groups as well, you know, organizations and that's critical because they represent a large group. But I still think, media especially in my district, media and newspapers are trusted so earning the endorsement still critical.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Like in Columbia? Yeah, the most covered small town in the country? – Laughs-

**Kip Kendrick:**

-Laughs- Right? I was going to say, I try to be as accessible as possible there are days where I'd missed calling people back just because I've got like five or six calls in a day, I don't have time...Still try to be as accessible as possible.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I interviewed someone from New York Public radio, WNYC for a project and he was like, oh yeah, coverage of small government in town, and I'm like, well where I'm from it's very well covered...

**Kip Kendrick:**

-Laughs- It's very well covered.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So the main and this one's a very complicated question, so if we have to explain it a couple of times, I get it... So the main theory in my project is kind of, the idea of Information Shortcut Theory, which is the idea that people look for ways information is condensed, and so do you find, like are there information short cuts that could be viewed as useful to campaigns? Like through endorsements through you know, news headlines, other ways that you try and to condense information that you think will be easier through... social media or whatever it's a, it's a question.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Right. So the idea is that no one reads anything even newspaper articles, no one reads them anymore and they read the headline or they read the byline and then

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Or reading endorsements..

**Kip Kendrick:**

Or read the tweet that links to the article right..yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So do you think that there are ways they can be viewed as useful to campaigns, are there ways that they can be beneficial, are people seeking those ways to condense information.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah I still think it's critical right, put out there on social media that, you know, you receive the... Missourian I guess doesn't necessarily, but, you know, receive the Tribune endorsement or endorsement of the other organizations. It's critical to be able to put that out there on social media as a, you know as a point of pride and you know shows that you're, shows that you have the respect of a major institution within your community... It that. Does that get at what you're asking?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah yeah. It gets at it. Mainly I'm also talking about. It doesn't even have to be like, you know endorsements or headlines. Do you think that there is a trend towards looking for that, like, condensed information whether it be through..

**Kip Kendrick:**

Unfortunately yes right? Yeah unfortunately yes. I mean, I think, no one is reading long form anymore unfortunately. You know, and as much as news breaks, anymore, you

know, it's a sad reality that newspapers can, or unfortunately are like a day behind or a few hours behind what the story the hour is, so yeah I think it's, I think people are always looking for a way to be able to condense it to something, into a sound bite, put it out there on social media and then continue to do that to reach a large audience as quickly as possible as often as possible.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And do campaigns take advantage of that?

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah, Yeah, Absolutely

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Care to elaborate a little bit more?

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah yeah yeah yeah.... – Laughs -

**Sarah Kellogg:**

You know I can't just take a yes.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah, right. Absolutely. Yeah I mean. You know, anyone who's, is disciplined at campaigning is going to have, is going to have a communication plan and is going to be disciplined on their talking points and try not to veer off script much, and any way you can control the message again by going to social media or you know repeating sound bites as often as possible in the shortest form possible...that's, you know, you have, where you have that five to ten seconds of the, of a constituent or voters you know attention you're, you're gonna try to catch that as often as possible.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So in I know you value newspapers and my profession thanks you, but if campaigns and candidates don't see a value in newspaper endorsements as they once did, how should journalists kind of change their practices and their policies to adapt to that political system that has more options of getting their opinions out.

**Kip Kendrick:**

Laughs. I don't know, that's a good question. Well, so I mean... I think the Missourian tried to get at this a little bit a couple years ago where they put out the questionnaire. They put out a questionnaire to all candidates had them go through and answer. Those are, I think that's one way to try and do it. I had a little bit of, there's a little bit of frustration, not frust-, yeah a little bit of frustration, a little bit of concern from the candidates' side on filling those out. I had a long conversation with Scott Swafford once about it. I think this is a good way to reach people you're also a boxing us into very

specific issues that are complicated and hard to explain in text that people are going to understand and also, you know, asking about bills. 'Would you support this bill?' Well, you know, I don't know what the I don't know what the form of bill is, so, you know, it's hard to say whether I'd support it or not. That's one way even though I don't like it right? I don't know that's a good question...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And that's okay. This is a very...I'm talking to...journalists, candidates, political science professors and hopefully I can get the campaign manager side, so if you don't know it's okay. It's a very general question So that's okay if you don't know. It's good question that's kind of what I'm getting at... So do you believe that the relationship between the media and politicians has changed as the way users consume media has also changed?

**Kip Kendrick:**

Yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And then, does it make the media more or less relevant to politicians or influential?

**Kip Kendrick:**

No I think that they're, I think that they're still as relevant as they ever have been. I think what we've seen more, is more of an adversarial dynamic and I think part of the reason why we see the adversarial dynamic is because some elected officials or you know people running for office are scared generally of press coverage and getting, you know, what story may be coming out there and I think that's part of the reason why you wouldn't want to, why so many candidates seek to control the message and shut out the press and speak directly to people is that they want to be able to tell their story because they're afraid of what story's going to be told and I think that that shows the relevancy of the press more than anything else is that candidates are scared. Now, I mean if, you know, the unfortunate reality is it worked fairly well in the 2016 election and I, you know, it depends on how the voters and consumers are going to consume media. If they're going to allow the elected politicians and candidates to speak directly and give them a message that may or not be true and likely hasn't been vetted at least, you know, when it's being put out there so often...then you know. Then maybe become less legitimate, but I don't think, I don't think the adversarial relationship right now that is really, came to light, or that is... Sorry, I'm running on very little sleep... That was so pronounced in 2016 and moving forward, under the new. White House administration.

I think that that shows a fear more than anything else and it depends on again, it depends on what the consumers, how the consumers respond.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And then, kind of the final question is do you think that newspapers should continue to endorse? Do you think that there needs to be a shift in how newspapers cover candidates or do you think the endorsements is still something that should be continued.

**Kip Kendrick:**

I think the endorsements are still relevant, yes I think they should still continue to endorse.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if you just want to say your name and what you do.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Mitchell McKinney I'm a professor of communication and particularly political communication.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so my first question is how much do you believe campaigns value the endorsement of the press?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

I think that campaigns desire and like to get endorsements and when you say of the press, these are usually an editorial endorsement by a newspaper. Oftentimes you'll hear campaigns tout, you know, in their ads or in other advertising their web the various endorsements that they've received so I do think that they like to receive them.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And how much effort do you think the campaign's focus on getting that endorsement.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Well and this might be related some... my answer to that might be related somewhat to the, you know, if we have questions or we discuss the effect or impact of endorsements. In terms of how much effort, we often see newspapers particularly the editorial stance or the editorial board of newspapers now, you know, we can talk about the prestige of the national press, there may... state and local even there say let's say for example local newspapers and that has ownership perhaps it's local ownership still, the editorial stance tends to be known by the community, by the candidates and so often times there's probably an expected, now I think, where these editorial endorsements might make some impact is when we see what we might call sort of a crossover endorsement. Of where a newspaper that traditionally endorses Republican candidates or democratic candidates in a race for some reason, you know, they say okay we've endorsed this party's candidates for decades, hundreds of years but we're not now. That I think, the impact of those types of endorsements, they get noticed and perhaps have a greater effect and so in terms of the question of what effort did they put in seeking out, it may be less effort if the expectation is, okay they always endorse, if I'm a Republican or if I'm a Democrat so we expect it, I don't know how much courting I have to do. Oftentimes as you probably know, these newspapers will have sort of an editorial board conference or meeting with candidates and they answer their questions and then they make an endorsement so there's some effort but I don't know that there's a great deal.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I mean actually when I was doing my literature interview for the project it talked about, like the surprise endorsement, which it like the crossover it was more it, they did have a

greater impact instances that I looked at. That's definitely something that's. maybe making the endorsements a little more effective and so, do you think has there been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for coverage for candidates?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

I would say yes in the sense of there's a lot of influences here. There's less, well in this, it's not just recently and, in the past decade plus, lack of newspapers, the closing, the sort of downsizing. Now in terms of the political reporting I think there's been some of that as well in newspapers and so the question of has there been less attention, probably that factor has influenced, okay we're covering politics were covering either local or state politics, that has been an element and then the very same factors that have led to a sort of a disruption in the newspaper industry, online, social media then that has created other avenues for candidates ,you know, we're probably now about two decades in where all campaigns, you know, have their web sites. They have their social media sites, well a decade for social media sites and therefore they're less reliant on traditional media coverage so that then is also influencing where as we we had a period of where campaigns, political campaigns, work largely on press releases to news organizations to get their story out. They don't have to do that anymore and that probably, I think, you know, in the context of this discussion lessens the need or the value of say endorsements. Fewer people reading newspapers again when it happens you will, I think, we see and hear more of endorsements in say political ads by the candidates saying, you know, ripping the banner of that newspaper and highlighting the endorsement.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that the size of the election influences that reliance of the press. Like, you know presidential, you know, would President Trump need the ? because he's already so well-known, versus the local election where they might not be as well known.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

It could, however, even more so I think in state and local elections we see incumbents who are now, you know, we have on some state level state races there's term limits, but even there were in some states where we have term limits we've now seen sort of a shift away from rescinding term limits and so you have incumbents who other factors come into play in terms of campaign finance and other elements they keep them in office and therefor you know getting an endorsement is not going to be a make or break and may not be something you know, name recognition for those incumbents, I think would probably limit the need of like oh my goodness I've got to get these endorsements and it'll get the attention of voters that so at the say, state and local level, those other factors are probably more prominent than say newspaper endorsements. National level, usually somewhere along the way you'll see a tally of the newspaper endorsements for that for say, the presidential candidates. I don't think in the whole scheme of campaign communication that the newspaper endorsements are, if we started to rank, you know, what's most important is that the money spent on advertisements, is that their effectiveness of their social media campaign, is it their ground game, is that there, you know, we could come up with a long list. The newspaper endorsements it is certainly not going to be high on that list in terms of impact.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there an appeal to connecting to voters directly and getting endorsements from the public on social media as opposed to a newspaper endorsement for candidates.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Certainly in the sense of campaigns using surrogates and I would say as we think about those surrogates as endorsers, that seems to be more prevalent both nationally and on the state and local level of prominent citizens and noted figure sometimes you know we get now in the realm of the celebrities, of the sports figures, of right? Of a campaign using those individuals to garner attention and connect with voters and so I do think that that strategy is likely more both prevalent and perhaps effective. Now I can't cite any particular study on the effectiveness, but the fact you know, I usually say when we're talking about techniques that campaigns use, and it's not just national campaigns, you know, campaigns now at all levels are so tested in focus driven and that if they're using these strategies, there some evidence somewhere that they're effective. And so I think that I would agree that likely those uses of surrogates to endorse and notable figures more useful and effective than say the, a traditional newspaper endorsements.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So then, which, a very related question, which you believe is more influential in elections, an endorsement for a paper or an endorsement from someone you might know?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

I would have to go with someone you might know and that goes back to the factors we were talking about. One to get the attention of the endorsement of the paper, to have it noted you have to be a user of that newspaper, which again you know readership declining. And then someone you might know, this is where the campaigns very artfully, you know. They have, well on the local level robo calls, they have that person tweeting out. They feature that person in their yard signs and there are other campaign communication, this noted figure that gets people's attention. So I think that would be more would be more is more effective.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So the main theory, we have to have a theory within our research element and mine is information shortcut theory and so are their information short cuts that would be viewed as useful to campaigns.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

When you say information shortcuts, you're talking about okay...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Condensed information.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Right, right, So, this I'm not going to read this long editorial... Right it's it's like I see this person with their arm around this politician and I make this association certainly. And driven largely by our media use habits today right? Oftentimes our exposure to, you know, we used to talk before, social media we talked about the sound bite and you know we would we would lament the fact that say on the evening news if the candidate was shown or we heard them it was seven seconds or four seconds. And so it's not the sound bite anymore it's the fleeting image on Instagram on our Facebook or Twitter feed as we were scrolling down and we see something and we make that association. And so I think in that vein, yes that messaging technique is going to be more effective than say a newspaper editorial endorsement. So yeah, I saw this person with, I come from, actually I taught at the University of Oklahoma before coming here and there we had several folks, politicians who would always want to be seen with the quarterback of the O. U. football team right? It's like oh, and for you know some constituencies voter blocs, that's very important.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I interviewed Senator Caleb Rowden and one of his points that he brought up when I talked about information shortcuts for with him he actually brought up the idea of like fear mongering and coming on specific issues on like, you know, coming to the most extreme instance of like a policy issue and that's kind of a shortcut. Do you have thoughts on that?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Yeah I wasn't thinking in the vein of fear mongering. Usually, there that message has to have a little more content, you know, to make a claim of, you know, someone has voted to allow criminals to be near your kid's school and look this criminal got out and did something bad and right? So they're, typically for fear appeal to work there has to be some context as opposed to what the information cues, shortcuts that we were talking about are sometimes just a visual someone's name, the kind of association of "look they endorse me," right? They attended my rally, how do you know, well look here's a picture of them on the stage. yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, I hadn't thought of that either. So I was like oh when he brought that up I thought that was interesting. Yeah, that's definitely what I'm talking about, with the idea of photos or even just saying this paper endorsed me, even that alone is a shortcut. If campaigns or candidates don't see a value in the endorsement as they once did, how should journalists or how should editorial boards change their practices and policies to adapt to this new political system that might not necessarily need them to get out information.

**Mitchell McKinney:**

Tradition and, I think the editorial boards, the newspapers and sometimes again we know in terms of ownership of newspapers these individuals, they want to be relevant they want to have, to perhaps think that there's an influence, you know, in terms of changing their practices. You know, that's the, that's an interesting you know maybe difficult

question in terms of, if one is advising... I think it's expected probably by readers. Those who are still reading of like okay you know the election's coming up have you endorsed? And what we were saying earlier the crossover, the surprise, That, you know, if one is in a situation of where okay we always endorse the Republican or we always endorse the Democrat that's going to, that lessens the value of that practice. And so, you know, on your question of what changes in practice or how they get out in front or to be relevant. I think there are other things that can be done in terms of news reporting today that can help them make healthy, you know, we're seeing some of this. We had a period, we used to have a period of say ad checks and newspapers would do this and now that we're online, you know, we have all of the online, you know, pants on fire and some of those I've seen some very good experiments by newspapers of helping to inform voters and check claims by political candidates, undercover investigative reporting... not undercover, investigative reporting those kinds of things. From a pro-democracy standpoint this is areas and resources that newspapers I think could invest in. Now you know, how we make our endorsements more relevant I don't know.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe that the relationship between the media and politicians has changed as the way that users consume media has also changed? So since many users can now, you know, interact both.. can read newspapers online everything// has that caused a changed in the relationship between the news media and candidates or politicians?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

And, you know when, we suggest change, then I'm trying to think, well was there a modeler system and has that involved or changed? I still think that we have by and large a system of sort, of you know whatever phrase watchdog journalism. And then we would have to separate out because most often what we're talking about in terms of newspaper endorsement is happening, not, you know, there's always a separation between the journalist and the news organization. I still think by and large we have journalists who are trying to ferret out useful information about candidates trying to inform voters. That relationship is and should be, is and should be somewhat antagonistic in a skeptical sense, right? I still think that we have that. Now, you know, I don't know that, to the extent that the new media environment, say social media and digital media have changed that relationship. Perhaps so, to where news organizations and the journalists are taking steps to brands their work, to, you know, to tweet it out They all have their, they typically all have their own, many of their own personal blogs where they try to promote their, so there is that. The relationship with our, with elected officials and candidates I don't know that it has fundamentally changed because of digital social media, it has changed in some way. Some of what I'm saying there is, I guess I'm saying I hope it hasn't fundamentally changed.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

My second to last question is do you believe newspaper's editorial board should continue the practice of endorsements?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

That kind of goes back what we're saying earlier in terms of relevance and should that... I think they will and this is sort of a vestige of this is what we do. If it were to go away, I don't know that, you know, we would, candidates or the public would say my goodness, you know, I have no direction I don't know what to do here. Yeah so that's it. So yeah I think they will continue whether they should. Sort of, right? They've got to write something right?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so is there anything that you were anticipating me asking on this topic that I didn't ask, that you would like talk about?

**Mitchell McKinney:**

I think we've covered it. yeah I mean, I actually personally I enjoy seeing and I pay attention to those of crossover endorsements. That's where something gets my attention and then I use that as a sign that there's something going on with this campaign, in this state or district or with this candidate. And usually you know the crossover is because some editorial board just says we just cannot continue what we normally do. This is so bad or egregious and that usually is a candidate, that we're just not going to do it and I so I think those are very useful indicators for the public yeah.

*Interview with John Ratliff: Wednesday, April 4, 2018*

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is, if you just want to say your name and what it is you do.

**John Ratliff:**

Jonathan Ratliff and I guess I'm a political consultant.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay so my first question is how much do you believe campaigns value the endorsement of the press?

**John Ratliff:**

Well, first of all I work in Republican politics, so I would say that I don't believe it...doesn't matter a lot to me because most of the time the newspapers don't endorse my candidate and I still win.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

-Laughs- Mmhm.

**John Ratliff:**

I did a race last night actually, in Columbia, and it was the first candidate I've ever worked with, it was a nonpartisan race, maybe that means something, but it was the first race I've worked in, in Columbia that my candidate was endorsed by the Columbia Tribune and I wasn't at all convinced that it wasn't a curse on my candidate at that point. I was like, uh oh, we might be losing this one because I've never had a campaign that I worked on that was endorsed by the Tribune.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And did you win?

**John Ratliff:**

We did.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Well, there you go! It's not a curse.

**John Ratliff:**

It broke the curse, I guess.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So how much effort do you believe campaigns focus on getting a newspaper endorsement?

**John Ratliff:**

It depends, so there are some rural papers around the state, that obviously outside of more urban areas focusing on. Like, I don't... It's a kiss of death for a Republican, often I believe to get an endorsement from the Tribune, from the Kansas City Star, from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, it's not helpful at all. Now in a more rural paper like, I'm originally from southwest Missouri, a little small town. We have a little, it's Stone County so we have Stone County gazette. Something like that, you know, a little paper, a little community, it's a little bit different. I think it could potentially have more value, but again I still, I've never focused that much on it because I just don't think it matters that much. I think circulation among newspapers is down and I can do a much better job controlling our message and putting it out for social media etcetera, putting my resources... You know, In a local race, like a state rep, in a county race, a state rep race, a senate race, even in some degree some congressional races, it's just as easy to do paid media more often than not to do earned media. Now statewide races, it's a very different situation. I don't need the endorsement, but we go out of our way often to get, again more so probably than even a congressional, but definitely statewide, go out of your way to get earned media because you can't afford to be spending that kind of money, every single week, statewide. Can't afford it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And you kind of touched on this a little bit, so has there been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for coverage.

**John Ratliff:**

Yes I believe so. I'm not that old though. I wasn't around as often back in the days when, when it mattered a lot more. I mean, I think we're even seeing that. I think TV is still king, I think broadcast is still king, but I think we're even seeing a shift away from the idea that you have to do those things so I think when newspapers really carried a lot of weight, I've just never been around that. When I first started campaigning between 6 and 8, 2006, 2008, so again I'm not very old, I'm older but not that old... That we might, ? the rural race, but similar times talk to that newspaper... In a rural race, one of the first things I do is, I'll go and introduce them to the paper because I want to be friendly and have a conversation. There are people that definitely do follow and listen to what the paper, the editorial side of the paper has to say. However, it's just no the end all be all for me. I think I can do a much better job having a direct conversation with people, as a Republican especially. I think, and I've worked, a couple of races I've worked on, or statewide things that I've done for ballot initiatives have been bipartisan and I will say that I believe. At least the individuals I've worked with, on the democratic side of the party or of the political spectrum, they maybe put more interest and more time focusing on that. And that's a difference in perspective, I believe. I know one of the nonpartisan campaigns I did yesterday, one of the guys, a friend of mine, he's a democrat and he works on, we do a lot of campaigns when they're nonpartisan like this. And he kinds of spend a lot of time working with the reporters and the newspaper and prepping for this editorial board... When I do a race that's not like that I just don't care. I assume going in that they're not support my candidate. Doesn't hurt my feelings any.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so what has replaced the media in this case? So, kind of, I'm asking has there been a shift away from focusing on relying on the press, so kind of, what has replaced that.

**John Ratliff:**

I think you go outside the press and you use social media to communicate directly with voters rather than communicating with voters through the lens or through the voice of a reporter. And I can tell you I have a love/hate relationship with Rudy Keller of the Columbia Tribune, I'm sure probably know Rudy Keller. Rudy and I have a love/hate relationship. Last night we were both together at this watch party and we yelled at each other for a good period of time. And my argument to him is always, I obviously as a Republican, I believe there's a bias and I'm sure there are people on the other side of the aisle that would say yeah there's a bias that's against them and poor my guy and then he... From where you stand you can always make the argument probably that there is some version of bias to you because you're biased in making that decision in the beginning. I still, I spend most of my time going around, you know, going around Rudy and his viewpoint of an article. And putting it out there, communicate directly to voters through social media, it's so cheap now, that I don't have to buy an ad in the Columbia Tribune. This last week was 2,500 dollars for a full page ad. 2,500 dollars on social media goes a hell of a lot further than 2,500 dollars in the Tribune, in my opinion.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Sorry, I'm taking notes with one hand...

**John Ratliff:**

You're fine. I talk really fast. So you can tell me to slow down or shut up.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I can relate. So, and you kind of mentioned this a little bit, especially with, like cost wise, but are there other appeals to connecting to voters directly and getting endorsements from the public on social media as opposed to a newspaper endorsement.

**John Ratliff:**

Yes, I agree because I think... I'm all about using social media to post endorsements from, kind of community leaders in an area, that I think that goes, so that they can relate to that. Now there are some... Again there are some, there are times, a matter outside of this, you know, unique relationship I have with Columbia. I'm not opposed to, often times opposed to getting favor, it's a good thing, I'm not going to balk at it. Again, outside of Columbia, it always makes me scared. But outside of that, you know, I think there's value, I want to utilize that. I would take the endorsement and I would take the endorsement and the put it on social media to push the narrative I want to push with it. But, if I had to pick between spending my efforts or time trying to earn an editorial endorsement from the paper, I would prefer spending my time building up the people, the community leaders, that I know can, will agree. We can put that on social media and put that out there. Put that on a mail piece we're gonna mail out. I think, today's campaigns, you want to control as much of the narrative and the message as possible and so when you can, you say... you put out the narrative you want for a candidate to their supporters

and from their supporters via mail, via phones via digital, I think that's the best case scenario. Because you're not, again you're not dependent upon someone talking about your campaign. You make your ? I've had tons of candidates sit down before editorial boards. "You know I think I answered their question, I think I did a really good job and then, it didn't go their way... "Well I didn't say it that way, and with the article they wrote, that's not how I meant it, you know, it happens all the time. And so it's, when you put, you know it's often, especially with the newer candidates, it's often not in the best case scenario, as a campaign, I'm not gonna have my candidate sit down in front of the newspaper or in front of a reporter right now because I don't think, they're not ready. To me a new candidate isn't always ready for the types of questions that reporters ask. Oftentimes a reporter goes in to ask questions, I believe that some of them have like, here's the agenda that I have, the questions that I want to ask and I'm going to keep pushing until I get to the spot I want to get to and I believe they have an agenda. So it's not worth it to me. I don't need the earned media, I can do paid media and I can do just fine. I can always control the narrative around my candidate that way. And that's what I choose to do. Now that's very different in a statewide race and obviously extremely different for a presidential race. You can't take any of the strategies used at a national level and compare it to a state level. And even still, compare what you do at state wide campaign to a smaller campaign because everything's a lot different. You're going to do tons of paid media. In Missouri, we spent tens of millions of dollars last cycle electing a United States senator and governor. You couldn't...even with that amount of money spent, earned media was still extremely important as well. You go to the event and you try to get the press to come in and you kind of open yourself up, you lower your guard, hoping that it all works out. It's a risk that's worth taking.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So you believe that the size of the race, affect how effective the endorsement might be?

**John Ratliff:**

Yes. It cuts both ways, and I shouldn't... not necessarily, the size of the race doesn't necessarily... it's not more important based on the size of the race, it's more important as to whether or not you open yourself up to have the conversation. If that makes sense. So earned media versus paid media. In a lower level race, earned media is just not quite that important, not as necessary. Most of the time because the candidate hopefully can raise the amount of resources they need to not have to put themselves, to not make themselves potentially vulnerable to someone else's questions. Whereas, in a larger level campaign, so as it goes up from, state rep to state senate to congressional...Every time the campaign costs more money because you gotta get more voters, the mail pieces get more expensive. The TV can and cannot get more expensive, depending. So you have to make a decision, can I afford to do that and a lot of times at the higher level, you can't afford to just go around the media completely. And so therefore you have to open yourself up to have the conversations and sit down with the reporters and let them grill your candidate with questions. Hopefully you've done a good enough job as a consultant to prepare your candidate for the questions that are going to be asked and roll with the punches.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you believe is more influential in elections, newspaper endorsements or endorsements from people that you know?

**John Ratliff:**

People that you know.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah?

**John Ratliff:**

Mhmm. Yeah, and I could be biased because the candidates never, the newspapers never endorse my candidates and I still win.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

That's fair. So do you want to elaborate a little bit more on that?

**John Ratliff:**

Particularly, ask the question again...

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Kind of, why, why are people that you know personally, why are they more influential than a newspaper?

**John Ratliff:**

Well I think it's, people... every day people, so it doesn't mean people that you necessarily know, but if you see on Facebook that Bob Smith, you know, who's the president of the local bank or the president of this thing or a former state elected official or the head of a local charity, you know, or whatever. They post a nice positive thing about the candidate. You think, well I like this person so therefore I like them, or I believe this person is like me, and they support them so maybe I should support them. But I don't think that many people sit down and go, you know, I'm just like the editorial board of the Springfield News Leader or the Columbia Tribune and I think they share my values. Because often, at least again in my campaigns, Editorial boards often do not share the values of the candidates that I'm working with. Now am I appreciative when they don't like completely say terrible things about my candidate? Of course. It makes it easier. But am I opposed to them saying nice things about my candidate and endorsing them? Often times, no not at all. But the reality of it is, I'm not going to go to bed at night, I'm not worried about it when the Sunday before or the weekend before the election comes out and I know that again... I keep poking on the Tribune here, but when the Tribune comes out, I have no expectations that I'm going to get an endorsement. That Hank's gonna say a single nice thing about my candidate. I don't expect it. I expect him to say the complete opposite and I go in knowing that and I don't care. The people that really are going were probably never supporting my candidate anyway.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So the main theory in my project is called information shortcut theory, which basically means that people look for ways that information is condensed and more easily understood. So, are their information shortcuts, I mean, that could be an endorsement, that could be other things. Are there information shortcuts that could be viewed as useful to campaigns?

**John Ratliff:**

I think maybe one would be, an information shortcut I guess. So maybe, if I understand this correctly, one would be an issue that would allow voters to make a decision, I think the first information shortcut for a candidate is, or for a voter would be their party. If they don't know anything about the candidate, if it says they're a Republican or Democrat or an Independent or a constitution or a green party or whatever. That instantly puts them into a spot. That's the first thing. Secondly it goes to issues. They say, okay, there are single issue voters, sometimes it's on being pro-life or pro-choice, sometimes it's being pro-second amendment or anti second amendment. Sometimes it's being, right now it's you either support marijuana legalization/medical marijuana or you don't. That's, I mean, a bigger issue. I think, there are some out there in different conversations that maybe it's the gay marriage issue. Either they support it or they don't. Either way, you know, I'm not... Unfortunately, I've knocked on thousands of doors, and you go and you talk to a voter and they go, the very first question is not about, you know, what can you do, what is your candidate's position on jobs or on education policy or on labor reform or on tort reform. It's none of those, it's what do they think about this single issue. And that's all they care about. They take the push piece that you spent forever putting together, there's text all over it and they look back and forth, "I don't see is he pro-life? Is she pro-second amendment? Okay good, that's all I care about. Or, is she pro-choice? Okay, no I don't want that. Or is it, or in Columbia, is he a Republican? No, I don't want it, throw it away, get off my property. And so, I think that's an information shortcut. Now, once you move beyond that to voters that have already, they're kind of put into these little boxes that you've already figured out, then you get to the independents, the ones who are slow to make up their minds, that are always the undecided that you have to work on. Then it's all the little things you do. That's like, you've already... you don't do as much putting... The first part of a campaign is to put people in those boxes right? So here's the... the republicans that are going to vote for Republican no matter what, or Democrat no matter what. They're going to vote for a candidate based off of this issue alone no matter what and you know where you start off with. Then you get stuck with the swing voters, the squishy middle, or whatever you want to call them. And you're trying to figure out what moves them. So then, the information shortcut I guess could be is, for some, are there voters that still exist that care if a newspaper's going to endorse, that's what they are going to make their decision off of? 100% I 100% believe those voters exist. I believe they're older. I believe the younger voters don't care as much about whether or not the newspaper said support them or not. It's irrelevant to them. I think they believe it's more important that their friends, the people they know and they care about, or people they respect in the community say good things about them... I think you have a much bigger impact out of that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And are there ways that campaigns can maybe take advantage of information shortcuts other than just like...I'm trying to think of like...Rowden talked about websites potentially, and he did talk about single issues...

**John Ratliff:**

So yeah, you know, I think you spend a lot of time, we spend a lot of time right now, modeling out voters and figuring out where they are, what issues matter and what issue is going to be most likely to make them move. And then we take, especially now with, you can target in the digital age, the same way with mail, mail's a little bit more expensive so it's harder. But you use phone calls, text messages and that you, you know that, this single issue that this voter cares about is immigration reform, hypothetically. And so, we only, maybe it's an issue we never talk about in the bigger picture. You know, it's never going to be on a broadcast TV commercial. So for this person, we lay out the candidate's position on immigration reform and we just focus in, hammer away, hammer away, hammer away, I believe it takes between 11 and 15 times of contact for a voter to make a decision to move from, 'I don't know' to 'yes' or 'no', either way. And so, more than anything it's repetition. So you gotta just stay in front of them, and just hit 'em hit 'em hit 'em hit 'em hit 'em. You need, a good campaign will spend all the time moving voters either to yeses or to nos. We keep pushing them. And then, once you get there, you kind of see where your path is and see if your margins, you're winning or you're losing, then you're going to spend more time moving outside of that and focusing on, well how can I get to, a no to a yes? Because sometimes, getting a no to a yes, that's worth two votes, not just one. And so we spend more time, towards the end of a campaign, you've ID'd all of your supporters and you're going to move them. In that same modeling, the same push is based...you look in to say this voter says they're supporting one of my opponents and one of the ways...But they also said that their number one issue is something that my opponent wouldn't support them on. So I need to figure out, can I peel them off and move them to a different way. So I don't, maybe, I don't know if it's an information shortcut or not, in the fact that you are, we are constantly trying to stay in front of a voter with my name, and then the thing that I think they might care about

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if campaigns don't see a value in newspaper endorsements as maybe they once did, how should editorial boards change their practices or policies to adapt to this change, to this political system that has more options now for getting news out?

**John Ratliff:**

Hmmmm. That's a good question. I don't know that I know the answer to that question because I don't know that there's anything an editorial board could do that would make me care.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

That's okay.

**John Ratliff:**

I just, I've been programmed to believe that they're going to be against me, so it's just a lost cause. I don't expect to have their support and so, if they want to start supporting my candidates, that'd be great, but I just don't see... I don't see readership in a lot of these papers booming and it's a big deal and I'm used to, with most of my candidates, I've experienced almost always them saying something against them or saying bad things about them or, you know, not being overly supportive or helpful to us. And so, I've just never really felt like I gave a crap what the newspaper had to say. I always send out a press release, and I send out tons of press releases hoping that one wanders in every now and then. I still play the game, I guess. But I don't, I never expect anything fantastic to ever come from it. And that's not every paper. There are a lot of good small local regional papers. I mean, I live in Jeff City. I love reading the News Tribune, I actually don't get the paper, I get it all through social media. And I think there's some great stuff there. I look at that all the time, but if the News Tribune... Actually I, we just had, obviously municipal races... I didn't look or care. I read the stories the Tribune would write to see. But I base my decisions on other things. It wasn't about, you know, I'm political, so it's maybe biased to ?? myself, but I didn't care what the News... I love the News Tribune but I wouldn't care for one second who they chose to pick 'cause I am biased in the fact that I believe they're biased.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe the relationship between the media and politicians or candidates has changed as the way that users consume media has also changed?

**John Ratliff:**

Yes, I believe, yes. I would say that the need for candidates to put themselves in front of newspapers and to concern themselves with what the newspapers had to say has become less important, which is, I think that's the reason... Because of social media's increase therefore, the ability for a candidate, like I said earlier, to go around newspapers, and editorial boards and reporters, and go straight to voters and communicate their message that way. It is, a lot of candidates who may be more inclined to have a, because they believe there was an issue there before, they weren't inclined to have a conversation with a reporter or a newspaper or editorial board. To now, they don't have to because they don't need to put themselves in front of them or be vulnerable to care what a reporter has to say. Now, I would say again, the thing is, it's not like I want to say it's a general rule, like, well this is how it is all the time, every time. Because, a ton of clients that I work with... so long as. It's often, so long for my candidates anyway, so long as the reporters of the newspapers are at least fair. Not that they don't ever say a bad thing about them. But if they're fair, then we're more inclined to go out of our way to answer their questions and talk to them and be nice and be on the same team because I think there are those voters that go read the papers, we still want to communicate with them, especially on the official side. So when I have a conversation, for those that do read it. But, and so we try harder to make sure those relationships exist, but the papers that have a tendency to always just being out there to get you on something. We're not inclined to play along because we don't have to anymore, right?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, should newspapers continue the practice of issuing endorsements?

**John Ratliff:**

If they think people care about that. I'm assuming you could, I assuming they probably have some analytics that will show that the weekend before the election, when they release their endorsements, that it shows, that people read it more or people don't and I think it, or that their sales of their newspapers go up in the paper right before. If it doesn't, then probably not. Now I'm a person that believes, I use data for every decision that I make, so if the numbers don't say I should do it, then why the hell am I doing it? But I don't know, I don't know who reads their, I don't know, obviously they've never shared those analytics with me, so I don't know. You might know better than me.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there anything else that you would like to talk about the topic that I have not asked?

**John Ratliff:**

No.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, first, if you want to say who you are and what you do.

**Tod Robberson:**

I'm Tod Robberson, and I am the editorial page editor of the Saint Louis Post Dispatch.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And, what does that job entail?

**Tod Robberson:**

I am the editor in charge of the editorials on the left-hand side of the page as well as an op-ed choices on the right page, right side page of the editorial package. I select the editorial cartoons, I oversee proofreading as well as writing of our editorial's ?. I'm responsible for setting the tone whole the paper, speaking to the publisher, meeting with publishers as well as the editor of the news half of the paper and just overall making sure that the institutional voice of the organization ? our editorial pages.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

-Joking- So a low stakes job right?

**Tod Robberson:**

Yes yes, exactly yeah. It is the hot seat of the newspaper.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So my first question is, how much do campaigns value the endorsement of the press.

**Tod Robberson:**

You know it's funny. A lot of people think that the campaigns endorsements less and less, but the exact opposite is true. I mean, we find ourselves inundated with requests from candidates: Republicans, Democrats, Independents, you name it, to meet with us. And they get very upset when we won't meet with them. And so we are still very much in demand for the opportunity to give an endorsement.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so you mention that campaigns contact the St. Louis Post Dispatch, so how much do campaigns focus on getting that endorsement?

**Tod Robberson:**

Quite a bit. It starts out usually with someone who is toying with the idea of running for office will, submit an op-ed to us. You know, people with a strong stand on whatever issue and we have to be on our guard all the time for who has declared and who has not declared for office. Because we will sometimes get op-eds and they're just suspiciously written in a way that is promoting something more than just the issue and so if something catches my attention that way, I will do a little bit of investigating and, you know, more

often than you would expect, I come up with the, you know, the clues that this person is running for office. And if that's the case I have to tell him I'm sorry we're not gonna run this editorial because you're a candidate for office. And if I run this op-ed from you, then I have to open up our op-ed page to all the other candidates who want to promote their candidacy. Our op-ed pages are not here for you to promote your candidacy. And so, that's usually how it starts. And then I will get a phone call from a campaign manager saying, when do you start interviewing candidates for this race, you know, primary race. And I normally will tell them, look, we are a small staff, and almost certainly will not endorse in the primaries except in very exceptional circumstances. We wait until the general election and at that point, we will invite the Democrat, the Republicans, and if there's a strong viable, independent candidate, we'll invite that person in as well and conduct a formal interview. And everybody knows when that happens, you know, I will come up with some questions that I want them to answer in writing. It'll save us a lot of time, and I will organize it in a way that everyone knows that this is the moment to state your case, put your best foot forward, to impress us as best you can about your suitability for this office.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe that...In talking to other people for this project, there seems to be kind of an emphasis on the importance of endorsements during the primary. Do you think there is a time where endorsements might be more desired than other times?

**Tod Robberson:**

I'm sorry I didn't quite understand the question.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe that there is a time when campaigns might want the endorsement more than other times. So like, a primary versus a general election.

**Tod Robberson:**

The really high stakes are in the general election without question. Obviously, I mean, you know, if you're a candidate, you're serious about winning, every step along the way matters and so you are doing everything you can to influence the editorial board at every step of the process. You want as much face time as you can because you know at some point, this editorial board is gonna write something that could influence public opinion and just tip the balance so it's very hard from a candidate's perspective for me to say that race matters more than this race. But clearly, you know, if you pass the hurdle of the primaries. The general is the one where everybody throws everything into it and it's do it or die.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Has there been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for campaign coverage, do you think?

**Tod Robberson:**

Well, different candidates have tried it. They think they can get by without it and it's a dangerous thing to do. The governor of Missouri has decided, and he's not alone, I can think of a democratic treasurer here in Saint Louis who decided to make this St Louis Post Dispatch, her campaign. I'm talking about the treasurer here. She made us the issue and you can research it. Her name is Tishaura Jones and it was nasty. The stuff she said about us completely unfounded but she made that her campaign to win office. And she was running for mayor at the time. And the danger of it is, you are not going to get our endorsement if that's the way you're going to behave. We are a serious newspaper, we have serious questions that we believe we are asking on the public's behalf. And if you don't have answers to those questions or you don't want to those questions and you're using this ploy of avoiding us or making us the enemy in order to avoid answering those questions, we're going to see through it. And you are doubly unlikely to get our endorsement and that's exactly how we treated her. It wasn't out of spite, it was just we saw through her ploy. We knew she didn't have answers for our questions and the way she chose to go about it was childish and it backfired, she lost. So, then the governor of Missouri tried throughout his campaign to make the news media the enemy. He avoided us, up until right before the general election when he agreed to come in for an interview. And it was confrontational. He turned to me at one point and said Tod, you're giving me a headache with these questions, and then tried to turn it on us and said all these questions you're asking right now, the people don't care about this stuff. And we were asking questions about the state budget. The state budget is underfunded. There is, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars in road work that needs to be done. The state education system is underfunded. There are growing demands from these different sectors. They're putting pressure on the budget and the money isn't there, how are you gonna deal with this? And he turns and says "you're giving me a headache, people out there are not asking those questions. That's not what they're asking." And he was really upset with me, for pressing all this stuff. And so, since he got into office, he has shut us out completely and so it has become a very antagonistic relationship because we feel he's avoiding the answers to serious issues. And he feels we're not giving him a fair chance. So I think it backfires, ultimately to start off with that antagonistic relationship by saying, we don't need your endorsement, we don't want it, we can win without you. You want to do it that way, go for it. I have yet to see it work to the candidate's advantage.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so, is there, if they don't rely on the press as much for coverage or to get the message out, what has replaced that for them?

**Tod Robberson:**

They think they can do it on Facebook or Twitter and YouTube. And so they will, they'll use all three and then they will create websites that contain links to what they've said on those social media outlets. Or, they'll embed a YouTube video in their campaign website. Eric Greitens, the current governor of Missouri, embedded all of these YouTube videos in his website that had him shooting an AK47 and blowing up a car and doing all of this other stuff. He's a gung-ho ex-Navy Seal. And, you know we denounced those antics

because they had nothing to do with running the state. He's not going to tackle the budget issues by shooting it up with an AK47 or blowing it up. It was all for show. It worked though. It worked in the sense that rural Missourians who might not be, have been asking the questions about the budget, were taken in by those videos and his gung-ho attitude and his whiteness and so that worked with him and they just barely put him over the top so that he won. He did not win by the same margins as Donald Trump won in Missouri, not even close, but he still won and that's what matters. So, I don't want to discount it, I admire him for pulling this off, but in the end, you know, right now is the time when the governor really needs to win the media over and he has so alienated every single media outlet in this state. Nobody is pulling for him, or giving him a sympathetic hearing as he is dealing with the very difficult issues on his sex scandal. I don't know if you're aware of that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Oh yeah, I'm actually, in addition to this project, I'm the statehouse reporter for KBIA in Missouri, so yeah.

**Tod Robberson:**

Yeah I don't know of a single newspaper or media outlet that is giving him a sympathetic hearing over this because he's spent so much time alienating us. By contrast, when someone who believes that we are antagonistic and they believe that we are not going to endorse us, still takes the time to sit down and talk to us, I bend over backwards to give that person a fair hearing and let them speak their mind and I try really hard editorially to reflect what their campaign is about, even if we don't endorse it. Mike Parson is a good example. The Lieutenant governor. When we wound up writing our endorsement for Carnahan for Lieutenant Governor, he was a democrat. It was only because he had more on-base experience than Parson did. Parson was a farmer and former sheriff and representative of a little district. He had no sense of, you know, what urban Missouri, you know Kansas City or St. Louis was all about and that troubled us. But as a person, he's a very nice guy, easy to talk to and so our editorial endorsement spoke, we advocated for Carnahan, but we said, we've got nothing against Mike Parson. In fact, just last week, I drew on that editorial endorsement, two years ago, in writing an Editorial that said Governor Greitens step aside, the state is going to be in good hands, with Mike Parson if you let him take over. We will get rid of this embarrassment, and this very capable person will be in control and that is fine with us. So if you're not too harsh with them when they're coming in, expecting you to be antagonistic. In the end, you know, maybe it works in your benefit. But we admire the bravery and the patience of those candidates. Who say, you know, give it a shot, why not.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So talking about, deciding to choose social media over the traditional route of newspapers, do you think there is an appeal to connecting to voters correctly and getting endorsements from the public, as opposed to newspaper endorsements?

**Tod Robberson:**

Well it doesn't quite work that way because I don't think Eric Greitens, who probably has more followers on social media than anybody else. I still don't think he has enough followers to win him an election just by using social media. That's not enough and not everybody who follows you on social media is an endorser. So I don't know that anybody has done a study of kind of the cost benefit of, if I have an x number of followers that yields five times x more supporters out there because of the buzz factor, you know. That person supports me and then goes on social media or goes out into the community and talks about me. Therefore, that person becomes my advocate to get me more support out there in the community, maybe? But I still don't see enough numbers from his followers to say that will win him an election tomorrow if he were to run again. I'm trying to think of other people... Well Tishaura Jones is another good example. When she ran for mayor, she tried just to use the newspaper, the St. Louis American, to advocate for her. And the St. Louis American only has, I could be way off, I think just a few thousand readers. So, that wasn't enough to get her through. And then she tried to create this social media buzz by taking us on and making us the enemy. And that got a lot of national coverage, but in St. Louis, I don't think a lot of people paid attention to it. So it's really hard to say that something that you really couldn't say without looking at the numbers and doing a deep dive on the knock on effects of having one person on social media advocate for you, does that yield more than just one person voting upon election day.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I'm not trying to determine causality. My question is on if there is even an appeal to doing that. Is there, like an idea of, would people think that would be a good idea...

**Tod Robberson:**

Probably there is. I guess if you're looking to run a thrifty campaign that, maybe you don't have a lot of money and so you're trying to get the biggest bang for your buck that you can. It is certainly a smart strategy to maximize your social media presence and do what you can with that exposure, instead of just relying on newspaper or TV outlets to give you that exposure. In a modern campaign without question social media plays an important role. Whether it's going to put you over the top, I remain doubtful.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that the size of the campaign would also play a factor, like a smaller campaign versus you know, a gubernatorial campaign versus a state rep.

**Tod Robberson:**

Definitely. I would suspect the more local a campaign is....it's tough. It's hard to generalize

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, I was just asking opinion, so it's okay.

**Tod Robberson:**

Yeah no, I would think that the more local a campaign is that you could, if you can get enough people checking out your website or checking out your Facebook page locally that yeah, you can generate a lot of buzz that way. On a statewide level it's gonna be harder unless you're someone like Donald Trump who already has a huge national following is very hard for you, Ted Cruz or Jeff Sessions or Chris Christie to generate the same kind of following that Donald Trump would have using social media as your primary outlet.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you think is more influential in elections, newspaper endorsements or endorsements from people you might know.

**Tod Robberson:**

I think newspaper endorsements remain more influential, and I'll tell you why. When I was a reporter, I was very very skeptical about newspaper endorsements. I thought it was inappropriate for newspapers to do endorsements. I wasn't even so sure about editorial pages in general because I felt that the newspaper's job was just to give people the facts and let them decide for themselves and an editorial page, the entire job of the editorial page is to persuade and not just give you the facts. It's to slant the facts to a certain point of view. The editorial mission is just: persuade. So back when I was a reporter, covering elections, I resented the idea that I would go to cover an election and the candidate would say, oh your newspaper doesn't support me, why should I talk to you? And I would go, no you don't understand. I'm from the news side, we don't have an opinion on this. I'm just here to cover you get that kind of cynical reaction from the candidates. But from a reporter's perspective you have this sort of resentment from a newspaper having taken a stand that you know is not the stand of what the news side is doing. And so, so then I go over to the editorial side and I see it from a different point of view which is the average voter is probably not gonna have very much access to a candidate. Yeah the candidate is gonna have a town hall meeting, and different candidate forums, and the league of women voters will give you a change if you want to come to it. But let's say you've got your kid's softball game is that night or you're just really tired from work and you want to go home and veg out in front of the TV. They're all kinds of reasons not to go to that town hall meeting and, or you just don't want to go listen to a bunch of people yell. And so the newspaper's job at that point is to become the eyes and ears of the general public and ask questions that the public might want to know. Touch on the issues that we know tax payers care about. How are you going to fill in all those pot holes? What are you gonna do about our failing schools? What are you going to do about racial division? What are you going to do about the problem with the police department? You know, all these issues we on the editorial board, when we invite those candidates in, we ask those questions and you won't see word for word what their answers are, in our editorial endorsement, but we make it very clear, we have asked on these issues, and the answer on this one was not satisfactory. This candidate was not prepared. This candidate, looks really great on TV, but when you dig below the surface. This candidate doesn't know what he or she is talking about. And so we take on that role and we try to tell people...

**\*Brief phone disconnection\***

**Tod Robberson:**

So our job is to say we know you don't have the time necessarily to go out and do your own research on this. But we are taking the time to do it and we are sitting down with these candidates because we know you can't. We know that the candidate can't come and sit in your living room and answer your questions. We're doing the best we can to fill that role for you and here's our answer, after having talked to most candidates we believe x is the better choice. And from that perspective, knowing all of the demands on a voter, knowing the demands on a candidate, and knowing that we can play that very crucial intermediary role, I believe is extremely useful and it cannot be replaced by social media or any other form. We get to ask hard questions and hard follow-ups to those questions and even harder follow ups to those follow up questions, until we can nail down, "Does this candidate know what he or she is talking about or are they full of shit."

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay, so you're kind of touching on my next question. The main theory in my project is the idea of information shortcuts, which is the idea that people look for ways that and information is condensed and therefore understood more easily. And so, in addition to the newspaper campaign, or a newspaper endorsement, are there information shortcuts that are useful to campaigns?

**Tod Robberson:**

Well, yes. Okay. We all have to do those shortcuts. Even in editorial writing, you know, the average editorial is only 450 words and you have to pack a lot of information in those 450 words. It is not easy. It involves a lot of editing, whether it's a regular editorial or it's an endorsement editorial. And in fact, it's a little bit harder with an endorsement editorial: a) because we try to pack a lot of endorsements on our page because there are so many candidates. So we have to reduce the amount of space we can give to each candidate or each race. And then, within that smaller space, we don't just have to reflect the views of the one we're endorsing, but we need to say a little bit about the other people running in the race. So it's a really tight space. So obviously, we have to resort to a lot of shortcuts. And let's say, you know, we didn't have that much, we didn't enough time with the candidate, so what we will do as a shortcut. We will go to their website or to their facebook page and we'll look at their bullet points. I do this still. I will go to Donald Trump's website to see, what was his stand on this issue back in 2016. And it's still out there. Or Eric Greitens, I went to his website to find out where he stood on family values and how he portrayed himself as a devoted father and husband. Because I wanted to know, in 2016, he was saying this about his wife and kids and how devoted he was to them, less than one year after having an affair in his basement. So those little shortcuts are very very useful, but they also give you little synopsis of where the candidate stands on this or that issue. And so it's very useful it is an important component of a campaign

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So you're saying that their website is another one, a good information shortcut. Those as well and endorsements. Okay, so **inaudible** if campaigns or candidates don't see a value

in endorsements, or journalism as maybe they once did, how should journalists, or editorial boards change their practices or policies to adapt to that?

**Tod Robberson:**

For the news side, it is, they should stay out of it, it is not their business. The news side, the business is just to cover it and treat that as an item to be reported. The governor declined to comment to the editorial board because he doesn't believe that it's useful or is worth his time, or whatever, you know. That's fine for the news side. Now the editorial side, I really go to great lengths to tell candidates, please please please, it is in your best interest to talk to us. Ann Wagner, from the congressional district north of St. Louis, she's a republican. She won't talk to us and won't come in to answer questions. And I have tried repeatedly with her campaign manager, over the years to say, no really, this is in her interest to come and talk to us. Even if you don't think you're going to get our endorsement, come explain yourself, it's worth it. But, in the long term, here's what's going to happen. Eventually, you are going to want to publish an op-ed about your great work up in Washington and it's going to be at that moment when I'm going to say, I'm sorry, you want to use us now, but you wouldn't take the time to talk to us then. How do you square that? And if they don't have a good answer for that or they don't say that'll never happen again, we will come see you, I will let the op-ed run, but otherwise I'm saying no. I'm not giving you that space. That is valuable space and you missed your opportunity. You deliberately passed up that opportunity to come and explain yourself to us. And you didn't think it was important. And so, I have done that with Ann Wagner's office because she deliberately chose to ignore us. Now, if Eric Greiten's office wanted to write an op-ed tomorrow about, you know, whatever his position was on whatever subject. I would be completely amenable to it because he came in to talk to us. It was a confrontational nasty meeting, but he came in to talk to us. Plus he's the governor of the state, and you don't turn down the governor of the state.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And so, do you believe that the relationship between the media and politicians has changes as the way users consume media has also changed?

**Tod Robberson:**

Yeah, it definitely has. Without question, as I've said before, candidates are using the media as a whipping boy with the, you know, if you're against the news media or you can talk about the liberal biased news media. Candidates feel they can get extra mileage out of that and they to turn the general public against us. It's very unfortunate, but it's a fact of life. That's just the way it is. But, I'm sorry I lost my train of thought, what was your question?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Just if the relationship has changed, you believe it has...

**Tod Robberson:**

Yeah, yeah I think it has changed, it's changed for the worse, but at the same time there are the vast majority of candidates out there still respect the news media, still understand we have a job to do and they engage with us because of that of that respect.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that respect for the media, kind of, changes again if we are talking like national, statewide versus local. Do you think the more....wider the scope the more that politicians can circumvent or go around the media..Does the size of the market matter?

**Tod Robberson:**

It's hard to say, you know, even someone like Donald Trump who just spends every waking hour of every day attacking the news media he is who he is. And he got to the presidency because of the coverage the news media gave him. And he is well aware that he wouldn't exist without us. So everybody, what everybody is trying to do is not so much is escape the news media all together and never see a word about themselves in the news media. They are looking for a way to use us to their best advantage. And that's not healthy, *\*inaudible\** I wish it wasn't so... but that's the way it is. We are a tool. Sometimes we probably let ourselves be used as a tool, but that's the way it is.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And has it's changed, does this make the media more or less relevant/influential to candidates?

**Tod Robberson:**

We are as relevant as we've always been. Especially with the print news media. We are as relevant as we've always been. And this is really interesting. We've, internally at the Post-Dispatch, and at other newspapers, we've been looking at some very interesting statistics about our coverage. Not just in print, but online, versus television. And whereas over the past thirty years the market in television has been fragmenting increasingly. So that any network, any channel, is seeing its market share being chopped into little bits steadily, because there are more and more options out there to watch a television show or watch the news, etc and have seen their market fragment. Whereas, ours for what we do has grown. It runs contrary to everything you've heard about the print, the dying print media. In fact, our market is growing and so try as they might to make us the enemy, try as they might to characterize us as a dying industry, we are actually capturing more flies than ever before.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

That's, kind of surprising because you think with all of the options, to me there are lots of options for online media as well but I guess you're more talking about print.

**Tod Robberson:**

Yeah and when you want to know specific things, you know, the bomber being captured in Austin or the protests going on in downtown Saint Louis after the Stockley verdict, you know, or whatever. Those print news media outlets are where people turn to for information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I mean, I agree with that for sure, because for the Mizzou protests a couple of years ago, I was at KBIA and was covering it. It's the difference between the Missouriian and Tribune coverage versus the national coverage, I mean there is no comparison... Okay, and so I think I know the answer to this last question, but, I'm going to ask it anyway. Should newspapers continue the practice of endorsing candidates.

**Tod Robberson:**

I believe so. And with caveat I offered, I know that reporters hate it because I've been a reporter and I've been on the other side and just hated it to death. But I do understand the crucial role that this plays in helping synopsise a big list of candidates and valid issues, explain it to people in ways that they can understand, and just give them a little bit of guidance. The greatest feeling in the world as an editorial page editor, is to be voting and to look over to the person voting next to me and to see them pull out the endorsement page of the St. Louis Post Dispatch to cast their votes. That said, I received some emails from people who say yeah, I take your editorial page to the voting booth and I vote exactly the opposite of what you wrote. But it still serves a purpose either way.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So this is a technical question, does the St. Louis Post Dispatch endorse any state senators or house..

**Tod Robberson:**

Yes we do. We will endorse for local races, like I'm not gonna, you know we're not gonna have an endorsement for whoever is running in Joplin for the statehouse, but certainly for the St. Louis area, it's complicated because in the St. Louis area. In some elections, you have 89 different municipalities, in St. Louis County. We have the St. Louis County general elections, you know for the county council as well as for the county executive. Then you'll have St. Louis city elections for board of aldermen and mayor. And then you'll have school board. And on top of that you'll have state representative, states senate, US representative, Missouri senate, Illinois senate. You've got East St Louis and Belleville and all those things. And so it's a handful. If we wanted to cover all, it'd easily be a hundred different races that we would have to cover. So we have to pick and choose, but we do our best.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there anything else that you would like to add, that I have not asked on this topic?

**Tod Robberson:**

No, I was able to get across the main point about how frustrated I was a reporter and then from the other side and that was something that I was thinking about as I was thinking I definitely wanted to get across and so I'm glad we got into that.

*Interview with Senator Caleb Rowden: Wednesday, March 14, 2018*

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, if you want to start by saying who you are and what you do.

**Caleb Rowden:**

Caleb Rowden, State Senator, Nineteenth District

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And what district does that cover?

**Caleb Rowden:**

Boone and Cooper county.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay so my first question is how much do you believe campaigns value the endorsements from the press?

**Caleb Rowden:**

You know, I think, I think there's definitely value. I think in, in a day and age where you know folks get their news from a lot of different sources I mean obviously 20, 30 years ago it was pretty much entirely the newspaper. Now everybody goes on Twitter and Facebook and you know, kind of get whatever they want to get, that sort of thing. So I think the, I think the value of it has changed a little bit over time, but I certainly think you know anytime you get something established, you know, an entity like that that endorses your campaign, I still think there is value and certainly in Mid-Missouri where, you know traditionally the Tribune endorsement has carried some weight in some cases I'm not sure, I don't know if there are any other Mid-Missouri papers that actually make endorsements, but yeah, so I, yeah I think there's, I think there's still value. I just think it's changed a little bit.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So how has it changed, in your opinion?

**Caleb Rowden:**

I just think that the you know you've got the, it's probably a number of things. Obviously again, people have changed the way they've gotten their news I think the relationship between the news outlets and politicians has changed, you know, some good some bad. I mean, the fake news movement is an interesting one and what it means for something like this, but I still think there's probably... and more in a community like Columbia specifically, but an educated constituency that still I think looks to a local paper to get local news and so I think that probably bleeds over into how local folks see their politicians.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

How much effort do campaigns focus on getting an endorsement like your campaign for example.

**Caleb Rowden:**

You know, not a whole lot just because I mean, so the Tribune I can speak to the Tribune process it was always just been you go in and have an interview with Hank Waters right so. So and we always did that, you know, and some people don't even go because they know they're not going to get the endorsement I don't think I've ever I got, I got like a half and half endorsement in my 14<sup>th</sup> house race, but didn't get endorsed in 2012, didn't get endorsed in 2016 but I've always had good conversations with Hank so I mean that that really is the extent of, in that particular process and you know you go in and you talk about issues and then he says whatever he's gonna say.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Has there been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for coverage?

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah absolutely yeah. You know I mean obviously Trump, just redefined this whole thing and, you know, some of it I don't think it's bad in that it, you know, it would be foolish of somebody like that who has an audience that big, not to take advantage of it in some way. I, you know, I think it would be more productive if it wasn't always, okay I'm going to use, and I think the governor's done it to an extent, well I'm gonna use my, this kind of built in audience to actually try to diminish, or you know try to bring, devalue the real media I, I'm not one who particularly buys into that, you know, kind of view of the world, but yeah I mean, you know, I say things on social media and, you know, try to get messages and certainly the campaign we did a ton of that we spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on Facebook and otherwise trying to get the right message to the targeted group of people.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So, you kind of touched on that, if so, like what has replaced that shift and it would be...

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah I think it's more that. Just because it's, now, you can, I run a marketing company so we do this for businesses, but, I mean, you can tailor an audience, you know, even now Facebook gives you the chance to have your email list that you've built up, you know, you can import that in and then you can, you're talking to those people in another way. So, I mean, I think generally speaking the idea that the drawback to the traditional media is that it is a bit of a shotgun approach, you know, whereas now with technology you have the ability to home the message in a little bit so yeah I do think there's there's, there's definitely value in that for candidates and really anybody.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And you're just like already, queuing up what I'm asking next, it is great. So then so there is.. do you believe there is that appeal of connecting to voters directly and getting

endorsements from like the public on social media as opposed to getting it from newspapers?

**Caleb Rowden:**

Right well, that's one of the things that, you know, Facebook, I think they did it at the end of my 2016 election, but yeah you can like publicly endorse, you know, a politician or something kinda, like what LinkedIn does with, you know, given... Yeah I think that I think there's value in that. I mean, anytime you can build either an actual or a perceived, you know, kind of grassroots movement of behind an idea or behind a candidate, you know, there's a lot of value in that which and it kind of goes again.. it is a little bit contrary to again only being able to speak to the Tribune process but I mean everybody knows that that's one guy's opinion literally. I mean sometimes editorial boards, you know, are three or four people and that's a different process but everybody knows that the Tribune has been, you know, Hank Waters' opinion for a really really long time so to be able to come, you kinda counteract that if you don't get the endorsement by, you know, working up, you know, a viral, more grassroots type movement that says okay yeah this guy doesn't endorsement but all these people do right so, so yeah you can do that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you think is more influential in elections, newspaper endorsements or endorsements from like the people around you, like it could be friends, you know, family, you know, the paper says this but I..

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah I think, I think they both have value I just think that it's, it's a different sort of value. At the end of the day.. One, probably it depends on if you're running a primary or a general because in a primary, obviously you're talking to one side of the issue and a Tribune endorsement in a primary would hurt you, right? Because the Tribune is perceived to lean left and for me as a Republican if I'm trying to win a Republican primary, having a left leaning entity endorse me may not be a good thing right? So, but in a general election, you know, in a tough, like most of my races have been, Republican versus Democrat if you can get the left leaning entity to endorse you then there's value in that. So, but I always think having, you know, regular people voters, whether they're friends or family or just people who've come to support you, I think that there's all, that always is valuable regardless of what race it is.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Okay so the next question is like a lot and so I know I can try break it down... So the main theory in my project is information shortcut theory which is basically the idea that people look for ways that information is condensed so they do less work so like instead of going on your campaign website and saying these are all his policies, you can go to an article that says these are his policies and so are there information shortcut and like you know newspaper headlines for example, or endorsements are...and so are there information short cuts that you think are viewed as useful to campaigns?

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah I mean I, you would say information shortcuts, in some cases I would say just fear mongering right? Because I think one thing that's always bothered me and everybody does it and I'm sure our campaign has done it over the course of time at some point, but you kind of play to the lowest common denominator of intellect and not intellect but at...being informed I think is actually a better way of saying it and so you know I think, I think if candidates can say okay we're going to, you know, really ? up this, this argument that a headline may reinforce or, you know, something this, shortcut, you know, could reinforce. Knowing the whole time that maybe it's not true or it's not completely true, you know, I I don't like that. I don't think there's...I think that's a really is just disrespecting voters because it yeah voters I don't, I don't believe and I wouldn't expect every voter to be engaged on every single thing that we do right? I mean because we do a lot we tackle a lot of issues and so that we can kind of take things out of kind of out of context and say one thing, and it happens on both sides and then on its every nobody doesn't do it but I I would rather, I mean I think there's more value one in having a more engaged constituency who is informed about issues in such a way that if one candidate tries to take something out of context they know better right? And so then actually that person get punished for it. But yeah I think there's plenty of ways that we try to do it I mean I do think social media is one of them because we get to we create our own contacts too. So that is a, you know, a glass house that we don't really have to worry much about.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah and so, can you give me an example like what you mean by a fear mongering like putting that idea into kind of a..

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah I mean I think in the, there's a bunch of ways that it happened that that it can happen, I mean, and I think you have on a national level I think, Republicans can do it in the case of immigration. I think Democrats can do it sometimes in the case of, you know, maybe gun violence, maybe some... in these really big complex issues where you're going to find really extreme circumstances on the side that kind of supports your argument, but most of the time those issues are much much more complex than that and so it is politically much much easier to make it simple because, to your point, the simplicity of it connects with people and so they get they get ginned up that they think, you know, whatever the worst element of this conversation is, is the actual reality, when yes it maybe was a reality in these defined cases but maybe it's not the general rule so and then otherwise I'd say just taking statements or votes out of context maybe I think that that's probably something that we do pretty well, at times.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if, I know you value endorsements, but if campaign or candidates do not see value in endorsements or journalistic coverage as they once did, how should journalists change their practices and policies to adapt to this, you know, different political system where you have that outlet where you can just get out your message other ways.

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah I think... That's a really loaded question. I have a lot to say on this. I think... It, you know, to a certain degree I think journalists are going to have to, they don't cover the news the way they used to, I mean they just don't and I, I'm not, I'm not a "big liberal media" like I don't use that as a crutch and it frustrates me when people do, but I mean I think the way people have covered Donald Trump it to a certain extent. If Donald Trump wins reelection in 2020, it will be in part because of the way the media covered him. So I think for me, you know, you're going to have to get back to a place where the general public has confidence that what you're saying isn't editorialized to the point of being biased right? And so I think some people do that really really well still, even in the, even when there's probably a tug to, I assume the editorialization of stuff, you know, garners more clicks and more eyes on TV and whatever else, but I think the best thing that can happen is that people just report the news and work really really hard to do that because the reality is ultimately and you've seen it over the course of time I think, I think that the news media has shifted how they've done things, but ultimately, you know, back maybe back a couple of decades ago people still get to the truth right? Generally people, once they know that, once the set of facts, most people are smart enough to decide for them and make a really strong informed opinion. So I think the news media has felt some sense, and maybe sometimes rightfully so, to kind of lead people down that path and generally speaking the people voted for Donald Trump don't want to be led in that way. They want people to say here's what's happening and we're smart enough to be able to understand what that means and so when they think that the, you know, that the big bad liberal media and the elites on the coasts are trying to coerce them into doing something that they don't want to do they're gonna revolt and that revolt led to the election of Donald Trump, you know, so. So that's just an interesting, I would love to get back to a place where you know politicians had a good relationship with the news media I've always had a good relationship with really anybody and that, you know, that camaraderie is there because I think but because I think there's tremendous value in what they do and what it means for us being able to get a message out about what we're doing on behalf of the people and, you know, all that stuff so I think there's a, there's a way back to that, but I think it will take, a little bit of probably change on the part of a lot of and then, that's probably more national media maybe the local folks but..

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think that it will be, I mean do you think that'll be a difficult task considering there are outlets where you know the governor is really great example, he does a lot of his announcements through Facebook. You know, he doesn't do press conferences.

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah. It will be to the extent that people find, see it as successful, yeah I think it'll be hard to reverse that trend and I don't think that you have to completely reverse it because look like I said, the governor or anybody else would be foolish not to use a platform that they've built up to speak to people who support him, I mean for the most part probably support him, but I don't, I think that probably the chink in the armor, or the flaw in that it in the way that maybe he's handled it specifically is that, that doesn't mean that you don't engage anywhere else right? So yeah I still use Facebook and Twitter and whatever else to get out those messages, but I also recognize that that having a good relationship with

the news media is, there's value in that for me and I think as long as... as long as you recognize that, you know, there are some days where they're going to say good things about me and some things, that some days they may not, that you gotta, I think you just have to kind of run that risk.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

And do you believe, I mean we've kind of been dancing around question, so do you believe that the relationship between like media and politicians has changed as the way that users consume media has changed?

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah. yeah it has, you know, I would... I've been listening to two or three books about George HW Bush and to a lesser extent George W. Bush, but there are some there are some portions of those books that are about, you know, kind of relationship with the media and even back then I mean there's always tension right? There's always been tension, but I don't think it's been it's not I think the adversarial sort of element of it is probably somewhat new. And my view of it is if I'm, if I'm not doing anything stupid and if I'm not doing anything that I don't want to hide, then the relationship has value you know. So again, that doesn't mean I mean, Rudy Keller's written a lot of bad things about me and we still get along okay right? So I'm okay with that and you kind of, If you get in politics you have to know that you're gonna get punched in the face occasionally and sometimes you punch back and sometimes you don't know, but yeah I think it has changed a lot and will probably continue to change, but I, it will probably... I assume that the environment will kind of adjust to the new technologies and then you know I think the folks that do it right will find the right balance between the two.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So does this make the media more or less relevant or influential to politicians?

**Caleb Rowden:**

I mean I think everybody would probably answer a little differently I think. I think in the short term I think, they have...the media generally speaking has become a little less relevant and probably, and that's I think that's part of the reason why they, you know, kind of on the national level have clung to this idea of okay well maybe we need to reinvent ourselves but in reinventing themselves I think they've actually done more to hurt the cause of trying to get back to kind of this place and that they were before. But I do think it gets better. I mean at some point it, some point it has to get better, or it just has to, it will I think it will balance itself at some point, but that could be a long time from now and part of it depends on you know who the next, in our context, who the next governor is and if they in four years or two years or six years I guess if they handle, if they do kind of handle things the same way, Governor Greitens has then you're going to see that prolong itself, and I think the same thing is true with whoever the next president is. I mean I think they, I would assume that even the people who demonize President Trump for how he does things will probably take some of the things that he does and rework them in a way maybe that isn't quite so, you know, unappealing to certain groups,

but he does it well. I mean there's no there's no way around it. I mean the guy, I wish he would tweet less but I mean things that he says on Twitter and otherwise carries a tremendous amount of weight and he knows, I think he knows that so.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So you've mentioned kind of the, the blurring of the lines between news editorializing things as opposed to.. and so, kind of, with that in mind should newspapers continue the practice of issuing endorsements.

**Caleb Rowden:**

I don't think the... I think there's still a reason for them to do it. I think there could come a point where if this polarization of, you know, that value voter America that's really generic term, but in the news media I mean if it keeps moving yeah there could be a point where the media becomes so irrelevant that they have to do some things like that just say okay no we're not, we're not, we're not involved in politics or just we just want to report the news again, you know, but I don't think. I think there are people who do it well and find the balance well enough that the statements that they make pro or in opposition to people still have weight and still have value, you know. I mean it and like I said they're different cases, I mean, I never worried about getting Hank Waters' endorsement because he was talking to a very small group of liberal individuals for the most part right? So it wasn't, I still wanted to have a good relationship with him. I still went out of my way to, but I didn't lose and I never thought I was going to get one, and I didn't lose any sleep when I didn't, but you know I think nationally, and I'm sure there are communities were, you know, the local paper carries still carries that sort of weight. But nationally, I think you see... there's still a pretty good kind of, cross section of, from state to state you know big paper and Arizona say one thing, and The New York Times says something else, and the Washington Post...so there's still enough I think there's probably still enough balance nationally that, you know, when papers put out their endorsements on that level I still, it's a different kind of value than it used to be, but I still think it's there.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah okay yeah because one of the ideas I'm thinking of with this research is kind of, there's already kind of that issue of, well the papers are biased because they're covering it this way so.. does there even need to be like that editorial section that even further confuses people, because they say oh it's a New York Times' Endorsement, but it's a different team

**Caleb Rowden:**

Yeah right right right... I think you'll see a, and there has been a little bit but I mean there are there's been an emergence of news outlets who don't, are not trying to hide the fact that they're pretty biased right? So, I mean you, we see that The Riverfront Times is a decent example that is, I mean they don't make any bones about the fact that they're, you know, just a couple steps short of socialist but, so I think you'll probably see more of that and so, that probably creates a bit of a vacuum for the entities who want to maybe be a little bit more traditional knowing that potentially being more traditional means that, you know, it's less bombastic and maybe fewer people are listening to it or viewing it or

whatever, so I mean you know it's the reason why, I mean we've seen the downfall of the Tribune because of you know, being bought out by this big conglomerate and that's what is happening all over the country and that's, to me that's terrible right? I mean I've always, I've always seen tremendous value and specifically in the Tribune for Columbia even though I don't, you know, I don't agree with everything they say or how they they cover stuff, but not having that I think is really detrimental and so if you see that, kind of repeat itself in different communities around the country, yeah there's a huge void there and it ends up being you know Newsy and entities like that probably that kind of, more on a on a viral sort of...more one on one issue sort of basis via video. I think there's more of that and, and so yeah it'll just be interesting to see how it evolves and I don't know who's I don't think anybody's got the beat on it yet doesn't seem like.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

I'm trying to figure that out

**Caleb Rowden:**

No that's good, this is interesting

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you have anything else you would like to add that I kind of haven't asked kind of general topic now.

**Caleb Rowden:**

No, I talked a lot.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So how much do you believe that campaigns value the endorsement of press?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well I think the campaign's always, a candidate always wants the endorsement and of course I joke with some of them about the kiss of death, you know, you sure you want this, it might not help you. But I've never seen anybody who didn't want the endorsement. Sometimes they don't seem to be.. depending on who their the, who the media person is, they don't care as much about it, I mean, if they think that I have a reputation as a liberal and they're very conservative, they're not gonna be as interested in it. But in our particular case we've always tried to be objective and we will agree with one side or the other but we try to give the information or perspective of both sides with candidates. And so I think that might make a difference, but in a national election, that's just the least effective, but the more local and unknown the issue is including the candidate or the issue is to the public the more help it can be for somebody like me to issue an opinion. And of course it does depend on the source I mean we, I have been doing this longer than almost anybody in the free world. -Laughs-

So I think people get familiar with the with me and think they can take it for what it's worth, if they think it's worth something else fine some people don't course and that's fair, fair enough.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, Actually when I was talking to Representative Kendrick. he talked about. There was a some editorial you issues about a bill that he didn't like it he was really worried, like contacted you about it so he definitely...both him and Rowden mentioned you. I was like, "I'm interviewing him on Friday"

**Hank Waters III:**

Well good.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah yeah and so then, kind of related, you touched on this a little bit kind of, how much of an effort you think campaigns focus on getting an endorsement?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well it varies. There's some...that just kind of disdain it, you know, they just don't think they need it and maybe they don't depending on what the issue is or what the circumstances are, what officer running for and so forth. But I think that It's one of those things in my experience particularly people who are interested in the venue we serve, they always, they're willing to always come and seek it. Sometimes they don't make the contact, we've always through the years of course we don't own the paper anymore, as you know, so it's not quite as much of this going on be we always used to reach out and ask all of the candidates to come in for an interview and I would spend typically an hour talking to them, you know, of course that gives more of an in depth experience of interchange between the two of us than you'd otherwise have, so it makes a little more...

rather than just, out of the blue, issue or not issue endorsements. And I think having some evaluation in some detail rather than just as some newspapers in the past have done, just say you should vote for Bill and just because I said so kind of thing so that makes a difference, how you do it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So you think there's, definitely an effectiveness more if the endorsement is really rich in detail...

**Hank Waters III:**

If the person the endorses...

**-INTERLUDE TALKING TO HANK'S SON-**

**Hank Waters III:**

Now where were we.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Ummm, effectiveness of endorsements if like the work's behind it versus, you know, vote for bill because I said so.

**Hank Waters III:**

Yeah well that's just kind of amplifying the idea that it needs to have some substance to it some apparently thought that has been put into it. And they, some of it's just a numbers game some cameras just like to list publications or people who endorsed them just as a, sort of a, checking the boxes, here are all the people that like me, you know, that's part of it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Has there been a shift in focus away from relying on the press for coverage, of a candidate?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well sure, I think so. I mean Donald Trump is the exemplar of the twitter method and there's some merit in an abstract way, in the public being able to hear directly from the principles like a president. Of course there's a lot of mischief and it too and that is that they, that he sends out and anybody who sends original information out on the social medium is not to be trusted and I mean this in a kind of abstract nice way just, they're not objective certainly their they opposite of objective. And so the people use that as a primary source of information, that's dangerous. Pay attention if you want to, but that's the value of the good old free press if it is still can...But all the social media direct contact interaction between the news sources on the public, bypasses that and I think there's a negative factor in that.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

You mentioned a little bit, why do you think it's dangerous?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well because you don't get a kind of objective journalist's view, or journalist and I'm not talking about opinions so much now as I am information, reporting.

The main, the most important thing newspapers do is reporting not endorsing because the people need to see things that ... hopefully good journalism is accurate then they can make up her own mind of course.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

You've kind of touched on this a little bit, so what has replaced the press? Is it social media or...?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well, that's a lot of it yeah. That and cable television... is a generic idea that a news source that's all broadcast that has a point of view mainly... I mean Rush Limbaugh's not a journalist, but a lot of people listen to him and believe what he says and he will give information that he and least, acts like is the truth, let me tell you what happened yesterday and so and so and so... He's not a third party because he's got a point of view and same is true on the other side too.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Is there is there an appeal to connecting to voters and.. like do you think there is an appeal to connecting to voters directly and getting endorsements from, like the public on social media as opposed to the newspaper?

**Hank Waters III:**

There's no way to tell what the public thinks on social media. You can get a lot of opinions expressed on social media but, how do you evaluate whether not that reflects the attitude of the general public. The election is only way you really get that. And we learn something about a segment of the public that was not being heard very well. And there was no way the endorsements were going to change that, by that ...the cultural shift is much beyond the effect of endorsements.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So social media likes don't necessarily equal votes in this case.

**Hank Waters III:**

Do what?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Like social media acclaim or popularity on social media doesn't always reflect voting habits?

**Hank Waters III:**

No, but in this case it probably did because there was, these things kind of go in waves I guess, I'm not an expert on social media, but I think most of the attitudes you would see

on social media probably, I don't know this, maybe they didn't but they...to the degree that there are a lot more people interested that kind of believed that we need a change, it's time for Trump and they liked his style or whatever it is they liked. And I think social media was much more of a result instead of a cause of that kind of attitude.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Which do you believe it is out more influential in elections today, newspaper endorsements or if you're on Facebook and you see a friend endorse...which do you think is more influential endorsements from people you know or newspaper endorsements?

**Hank Waters III:**

That depends again on what the issue is. If it's a presidential election, I doubt that that's nearly as important as it would be if it's a local, a school board election when there are four candidates and nobody really, none of them have run for office before. And oftentimes you may see an ad, and people will run a full page ad with a list of names, that's very effective because everybody will read, that's interesting to them then they'll see people they know in and if they see people they know are endorsing you for school board they'll say well she must be all right in. That makes a difference for me. If they see a full page ad and some local people in the town, even a lot of them are endorsing somebody for president, that doesn't have as much effect because people are making up their own mind. I don't need Bill to tell me how to vote for president, you know.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So you're actually kinda touching on the main theory that I'm working on with this project and it's the idea that people look for ways that information is condensed and therefore understood more easily. Headlines are one way endorsements are another information, like this is called information short cuts and that's another one. Are there information shortcuts such as endorsements they can be viewed as useful to campaigns?

**Hank Waters III:**

Yeah sure. It's a, you said a shortcut, it's an advisory and it depends on two things. One is whether or not you need or want advice, which is, we talked about the difference between a presidential campaign and a school board campaign. And whether or not the advisor has any credibility. I mean a newspaper that has been in business for a hundred years and people know about it and all the people who run it and all of that has a little more clout than somebody you've never heard of before. And somebody like Rush Limbaugh, again I'll use him as an example of the general category of people who have an attitude. His advice is less credible because it's not objective, you know it's not objective. You can guess who he's going to endorse without having him tell you. But somebody who you think is objective and who does his own independent research or her own independent research might be more useful to an average consumer of information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah and kind of touching on that, if it's instances with Rush, a lot of people who tuned in aren't really looking for that endorsement right?

**Hank Waters III:**

Right. They're looking for reinforcement of what they already believe. That's different than somebody who really wants information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Are there other, other than endorsements, are there other shortcuts or ways to condense information that you think candidates would value?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well I've always in, for years, issued what I call voters guide the day before the election. And particularly for local issues this is helpful I just simply go down the and list all the ballot items and remind people what our endorsements were, what we recommend as far as how to vote. And people have said to me that's helpful because I just had forgotten, you're not paying the kind of attention that somebody like I am. They say I don't remember what he said, but I'm getting ready to vote so I'll take a look at that list and if I believe it makes sense or if I don't know anything about the people on my views as advice and then the joke is and people tell me, well that's good to have that list now I know what not to vote for. So it's got that kind of personal element to it.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah, Rowden kind of joked and said if I got an endorsement I don't know how it would be for a conservative in a primary situation, but in the general he's said your endorsement would have been valuable, so that's an interesting perspective of how like, you know, party affiliation playing into it.

**Hank Waters III:**

That's an example. People who already belong to a party and think they can figure out a primary candidate...by the time it gets to the general election they're choosing between somebody I don't know as well and they might find it more helpful, is that what you're saying?

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah I mean yeah, Rowden was saying when he's running as a Republican against a bunch of other Republicans your endorsement might not be great because you're perceived as a liberal, but in the general election if you got the endorsement that would have been really useful so we talked about that and how it depends on who you're running against as well.

**Hank Waters III:**

And that makes sense.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you think Columbia is maybe an exception because it's such a well, it has a reputation for being a journalism town with the j-school and all the different newspapers. Do you think that a newspaper endorsement is maybe stronger here than would be in other places?

**Hank Waters III:**

Probably so. I think that there's more interest in journalism here for obvious reasons and it's a college town regardless of the journalism aspect and they're... people tend to be more thoughtful and interested in public affairs I think. Better consumers of journalism in general.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So if campaigns or candidates don't see a value in newspaper endorsements as they might of once did. How should journalists, should journalists change their practices and policies to adapt to that system that now has more options for getting news out?

**Hank Waters III:**

Well most newspapers and radio stations too, TV stations try to have online presence. We all try to have digital versions, but I don't think it's ever is effective in particular for newspapers as the print version. There's several reasons, one is that I think the evidence is clear that people don't like to read long form text on screens as well as they do in print. I've seen that in many ways. There is online, there are online novels and they have books, but there have been studies done, experiments done that show given a choice, even college students who are supposed to be is younger and entirely devoted to digital stuff. And there was one good study, I've forgotten what the discipline was. An instructor gave everybody a print book and of this textbook and of course there was also the, it was also put online. So students could choose what they wanted, or look at both and all the rest, by the end of that course they took a survey to find out what they used and liked most and it was just a dead heat. A tough toss up. As many liked the book version is they did the digital version and that's kinda, he wasn't sure he gonna find that. He thought maybe the young students would be more interested in digital, but there's value in both and in particular as far as a business model digital is harder for a publication like ours to use successfully. There are some online media like Huffington Post like say, it's a separate, born from scratch media that you might like but she wouldn't say that it's a substitute for the Saint Louis Post Dispatch if you live in Saint Louis. Newspapers have more of an appeal particularly medium to smaller ones with local constituents. There's nothing we can do to rival Twitter. I mean we're the same kind of medium. Some people, I think Twitter competes with us for attention. But that is not, we can never be Twitter, so the question for and even radio stations like KBIA that are determined to be credible, substantial sources of information... Some people don't want that, they want to get on Facebook and see what their grandkids did this morning.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

So then should KBIA or other news corporations, should they be using like Twitter, and Facebook and basically be using those tools to garner, to use their influence like to publish their editorials, like how should newspapers be adapting to this changing way of getting information?

**Hank Waters III:**

We can't have that audience, we're just not gonna get that audience. We do need to have we have, the tribute and other newspapers have a lot of online audience and so if we want our online presence to be useful it can be and interesting and easy to use. But there's no way you can duplicate online what to what a local newspaper has done I mean the online version even if It has it is not gonna be the same...the school lunch menus and that in the agenda for the city council meeting and just all the details of local information that nobody else does as well. But that's not the same thing as an endorsement values.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Do you believe the relationship between the media and politicians, you know, editorially or even trailer up has changed, as the way I think, over time, as the way that media is consumed has also changed.

**Hank Waters III:**

Well, it has become, now that there are all these options, that's the way it's changed back in the former days the primary source of information for any citizen was a newspaper. And so that's not true anymore. People like to play with their phones and they like to, you know, you're on campus, you know, you walk around campus what is everybody doing and even while they are walking, you know, they can't do that with a newspaper and they don't. The amount of time spent on digital media is greater, I think now without any question. It's a matter of just time, available time, as much as anything. When I was young too, as a matter of age, when I was your age, I was not a very good consumers of newspapers even though we were in the business, we owned one. It just was, and that's what I did as a youngster when I got to be a young adult, was...had a family. Then the newspaper became much more interesting because there was a more comprehensive source of information.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Has this change made media more or less influential politicians or more relevant to politicians.

**Hank Waters III:**

Yeah I think it probably has. I don't think that the, as many people, you hear people of that and they don't think as many people read newspapers and they have some basis for that so in that regard I think it has made a difference, yeah.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Have you personally seen a change in the number of politicians that are willing to meet with you for endorsements?

**Hank Waters III:**

No I don't think so. Of course I'm now retired so I'm not...But no that, particularly in this market where we had a reputation and a history of doing a lot of communication on the subjects of..no other medium I think matched what we did with elections we ran a lot of stories about it and we ran interviews with the candidates and then I had interviews with the candidates and then I ran endorsements and then we really, paid a lot more, more than

the average newspaper even, attention. And in some markets, the bigger they, a place like St. Louis, they just can't begin to be as local as we were, we are, have been. The paper's changed since it's changed ownership.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Should newspapers and other media outlets should they continue to give out endorsements?

**Hank Waters III:**

They should, but not many, in fact by the time in recent years even, not nearly as many were doing it as we were. We just kind of got into the habit and kept doing it. And it varies from place to place. But I think that they will, it would be good if papers would do it would help, it's expensive, you know, it takes time and money to do that. So that's one of the problems of papers that papers have and radio stations have never been able to do as much of that as newspapers. So, I don't know what to say about the difference there. They just don't it's not their cup of tea so much.

**Sarah Kellogg:**

Yeah ended so you're saying that like a lot of times with the endorsement and it depends on the market size as well if whether or not they should endorse or not.

**Hank Waters III:**

Well, that's been, is not really a factor so much of their arrival of social media, it's just always been the phenomenon of the mission or goal that the medium thinks it has and what the resources it has, I mean there's never, in most markets. It's probably still true that newspapers have bigger news staffs and just, they can afford it and want it to and adopt as a mission more comprehensive news coverage so they are able to do more of that kind of thing.