

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 264

By Senators Woodrum, Deeds, Tarr, and Barrett

[Introduced January 11, 2024; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §59-3-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
2 reducing rates for legal advertising.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3. NEWSPAPERS AND LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

§59-3-3. Rates for legal advertisements; computation; filing affidavits with Secretary of State.

1 (a) ~~The rates which a A publisher or proprietor of a qualified newspaper in West Virginia~~
2 ~~may charge and receive four cents per word for a single or first publication of any legal~~
3 ~~advertisement set solid. depends on the bona fide circulation of the newspaper, as follows:~~

4 ~~(1) Four cents per word if the qualified newspaper has a bona fide circulation of less than~~
5 ~~one thousand, except as provided in subdivision (1), subsection (a) of this section;~~

6 ~~(2) Eight and one-half cents per word if the qualified newspaper has a bona fide circulation~~
7 ~~of one thousand to five thousand;~~

8 ~~(3) Nine cents per word if the qualified newspaper has a bona fide circulation of more than~~
9 ~~five thousand but less than ten thousand;~~

10 ~~(4) Ten cents per word if the qualified newspaper has a bona fide circulation of more than~~
11 ~~ten thousand and less than thirty thousand; or~~

12 ~~(5) Eleven cents per word if the qualified newspaper has a bona fide circulation of thirty~~
13 ~~thousand or more: *Provided*, That on July 1, 2003 and on July 1, 2004 and on July 1, 2005 the~~
14 ~~allowable rate per word in each of the classifications of qualified newspapers with reference to~~
15 ~~circulation as set forth in this subsection shall, for each classification, increase 1¢ per word over~~
16 ~~the prior year's rate~~

17 (b) In computing the number of words in a legal advertisement, not set solid, the basis is
18 the size of type in which legal advertising is set by the qualified newspaper making the publication
19 and shall be computed at the legal rate as though the matter were solid type, that is to say, on the
20 basis of 84 words to the single column inch in six point type and 54 words to the single column inch

21 in eight point type and any other size type in proportion.

22 (c) In determining the cost of a legal advertisement which is to appear more than once in
23 the same qualified newspaper, the cost for the first publication shall be computed as specified in
24 subsections (a) and (b) of this section and the cost of the second and each subsequent publication
25 shall be 75 percent of the cost of the first publication computed as specified in subsections (a) and
26 (b) of this section.

27 (d) The average bona fide circulation stated by each qualified newspaper in the statement
28 filed by the newspaper with the United States post office department in October of each year shall
29 control the rate of circulation classification of the qualified newspaper for the period commencing
30 July 1 of each year until the last day of June of the following year. On or before November 1 of each
31 year the publisher or proprietor of each newspaper desiring to publish any legal advertisement
32 during the ensuing one-year time period commencing July 1 shall file with the Secretary of State
33 an affidavit stating the average bona fide circulation of the newspaper during the preceding 12-
34 month time period ending September 30 of each year and shall set forth sufficient facts in the
35 affidavit to show whether the newspaper is a qualified newspaper. The average bona fide
36 circulation stated in the affidavit by each qualified newspaper shall control the rate circulation
37 classification for the ensuing 12-month period commencing July 1. Any qualified newspaper for
38 which the required affidavit is not filed on or before March 1 of any calendar year shall be
39 conclusively presumed to have for the ensuing 12-month period commencing July 1 of such year a
40 bona fide circulation of less than 1,000. At the time a publisher or proprietor of a qualified
41 newspaper files an affidavit with the Secretary of State, as required by this subsection, the
42 publisher or proprietor shall notify the clerk of the county commission and the board of education of
43 the county in which the qualified newspaper is published of the circulation classification of the
44 qualified newspaper and of the applicable rate for publishing legal advertisements in the qualified
45 newspaper during the ensuing 12-month period commencing July 1. If the qualified newspaper is
46 published in a municipality, the publisher or proprietor shall at the same time also furnish the same

47 notification to the clerk or recorder of the municipality.

48 (e) The rate charged for political advertising appearing in a newspaper at any time or times
49 during the time period commencing 30 days prior to any primary or general election and ending the
50 day following the election may not exceed 105 percent of the lowest commercial rate charged by
51 the newspaper in which the political advertising appears.

52 (f) Nothing contained in this section prohibits qualified newspapers from charging less than
53 the specified rates for any legal advertisement or from charging usual and customary rates for
54 notarizing and producing additional copies of the affidavits and statements required in §59-3-4 of
55 this code.