

Coloradans urge CCJJ to reconsider

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

More than 100 Colorado residents this week sent a joint letter to the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice urging the organization to reconsider the recommendation it made in July to repeal the current Colorado law prohibiting theft of newspapers to deprive the public access to information in those newspapers.

The letter stated that readers, advertisers and newspapers are all victims when newspapers are stolen, that having a law in place acts as a deterrent to crime and that repeal of the law would send a message that stealing to censor the free flow of information “would establish a policy that stealing papers to deprive the public access to information is perfectly OK.”

People from throughout Colorado sent the letter with a variety of interests that range from newspaper readers to newspaper advertisers to statewide and regional business organizations to past and present newspaper owners and employees.

The Prowers County Sheriff and Superintendent of the Littleton Public Schools were among the people listed on the letter.

“Both the number of people who signed onto this letter and their many diverse interests should send a message to the CCJJ that Colorado’s newspaper theft statute is both an important tool and a strong message that the free flow of information is important in our state,” said Samantha Johnston, a signer of the letter who is executive director of the Colorado Press Association.

“We hope that the CCJJ will reconsider its recommendation, but regardless, it’s vitally important the Colorado legislators know what a mistake it would be to repeal this important law,” added Johnston.

The newspaper theft law was passed in 2004 after virtually the entire run of a weekly free distribution newspaper was stolen in Eagle County and local prosecutors did not believe it could be prosecuted without a specific law in place.

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