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Includes: LA 25-20, and LA 15-25

TITLE 44

MEDIA AND PRESS

Chapter

1. Independent Press
2. Press Protection

CHAPTER 1

INDEPENDENT PRESS

Section

1. Short title
2. Purpose
3. Constitutional rights
4. Policy, an independent Cherokee media
5. Providing for independent print and electronic publications
6. Editorial Board
7. Powers and duties
8. Executive Editor

§ 1. Short title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Independent Press Amendment Act of 2009.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009.

§ 2. Purpose

This act affirms the policy regarding the Cherokee Nation's press. It is imperative to have measures in place to ensure the freedom of the press and to ensure the tribal publications have the independence to report objectively.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009.

§ 3. Constitutional rights

The Constitution of the Cherokee Nation provides that the principles of free speech and free press, the rights of the people to assemble and petition for redress of grievances shall not be abridged.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009.

§ 4. Policy, an independent Cherokee media

The Cherokee Nation's Publications Department shall be independent from any undue influence and free of any particular political interest. It is the duty of the Publications Department to use any necessary forms of electronic and print media to report without bias the activities of the government and the news of interest to have informed citizens.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009.

§ 5. Providing for independent print and electronic publications

A newspaper and other forms of electronic media shall be published periodically to report news and provide a forum for all views of the Cherokees.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009.

§ 6. Editorial Board

A. An Editorial Board is hereby created and shall consist of five members. At least three Board members must (i) be at least 25 years of age, (ii) have quality experience in management and operations of publications; (iii) be of good character and have a reputation of integrity; (iv) be physically able to carry out the duties of office; and (v) certify he or she will adhere to the standards of accepted ethics of journalism as defined by the Society of Professional Journalists and endorsed by the Native American Journalists Association. The other Board members must (i) be at least 25 years of age; (ii) have quality experience in business management; (iii) be of good character and have a reputation of integrity; and (iv) be physically able to carry out the duties of office.

B. The Principal Chief shall appoint two members of the Editorial Board who must be citizens of the Cherokee Nation and one of which must have quality experience in the management and operations of publications; the Council shall appoint two members of the Editorial Board who must be citizens of the Cherokee Nation and one of which must have quality experience in the management and operations of publications; and the fifth member shall be appointed by the other four members of the Editorial Board and such person must be a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

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All members of the Editorial Board shall be subject to confirmation by the Council and the Principal Chief.

C. One member shall serve as Chairperson, one member shall serve as Vice Chairperson, and one member shall serve as Secretary. Officers shall be designated by the Editorial Board at the first meeting of each fiscal year.

D. The terms of the office of the Board Members shall be six years.

E. Board Members shall serve their terms of office free from political influence from any Executive or Legislative Officials of any Branch, Division, or Department of the government of the Nation and may be removed only for cause subject to a hearing by the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court. A petition for removal for cause may be brought by a vote of the majority of Council members, or the Principal Chief. Except as authorized under the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, no member of the Board shall, directly or indirectly, solicit, receive, or in any manner be concerned in soliciting or receiving any assessment, subscription, or contribution for any political organization, candidacy, or other political purpose. The Board Members shall not participate in any political campaign or be involved in any tribal political activity, except to exercise his or her right as a citizen to express his or her individual opinion and cast his or her right to vote.

F. The Board Members shall be provided a monthly stipend to be paid after the first meeting of each month. The stipend for Board chair will be \$1,250 monthly and the stipend for other Board Members will be \$1,000 monthly, said increased rates effective no later than October 1, 2025. The Board Members may be provided for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in pursuit of their duties consistent with the policies of the Cherokee Nation as recommended by the Executive Editor and upon appropriate resolution of the Board.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009; LA 22-19, eff. November 19, 2019; LA 25-20, eff. November 16, 2020; LA 15-25, eff. June 16, 2025.

§ 7. Powers and Duties

The Editorial Board shall have the following powers and duties:

A. To establish and enforce an editorial policy that will be fair and responsible in the reporting of general news, current events, and issues of Cherokee concern including activities of the community, language, culture, history, and other subjects which will inform the Cherokee citizenry about their government, tribe, and culture.

B. To ensure the operational structure is sound and that the duties and obligations require of the Board are fulfilled.

C. To review departmental policies to ensure fairness and professionalism in all

department practices.

D. To hold periodic public meetings in order to conduct official department business and policy review.

E. To publish electronically, at least on a quarterly basis, copies of council meeting minutes and travel expenses of elected officials on the Cherokee Phoenix website to fulfill the intent of previous legislative acts requiring such publications.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009; LA 22-19, eff. November 19, 2019.

§ 8. Executive Editor

A. The Executive Editor must (i) be at least 25 years of age, (ii) have a bachelor's degree in journalism or a related field from a college or university, or an appropriate combination of education and experience; (iii) be of good character and have a reputation of integrity; (iv) be physically able to carry out the duties of the office; (v) certify that he or she will adhere to the standards of accepted ethics of journalism as defined by the Society of Professional Journalists and endorsed by the Native American Journalists Association; (vi) have the experience necessary for the successful operation of the publication; and (vii) be a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

B. Whenever a vacancy occurs the Editorial Board shall recommend to the Principal Chief an Executive Editor for appointment.

C. The Executive Editor shall serve his or her term of office free from political influence from any department of the government of the Nation and may be removed only for cause. The Executive Editor shall not, directly or indirectly, solicit, receive, or in any manner be concerned in soliciting or receiving any assessment, subscription, or contribution for any political organization, candidacy, or other political purpose. The Executive Editor shall not participate in any political campaign or be involved in any tribal political activity, except to exercise his or her right as a citizen to express his or her individual opinion and cast his or her right to vote.

LA 19-00, eff. March 21, 2005. Amended LA 08-01, eff. March 16, 2001; LA 05-05, eff. January 17, 2005; LA 16-09, eff. June 22, 2009; LA 22-19, eff. November 19, 2019.

CHAPTER 2

PRESS PROTECTION

Section

21. Short title

22. Purpose

23. Definitions

24. Protection of sources and other information—Exceptions

§ 21. Short title

This act shall be referred as the "Free Press Protection and Journalist Shield Act of 2012".

LA 13-12, eff. April 20, 2012.

§ 22. Purpose

The purpose of this act is to affirm the independence of a free press in Cherokee Nation by providing protection of journalistic sources and information from disclosure in any Cherokee Nation proceeding.

LA 13-12, eff. April 20, 2012.

§ 23. Definitions

For the purposes of this act:

1. "**Cherokee Nation proceeding**" includes any proceeding or investigation before or by any judicial, legislative, executive or administrative body within Cherokee Nation.

2. "**Information**" includes any written, oral or pictorial news or any digital or tangible record.

3. "**Journalist**" means any person who is a reporter, photographer, editor, commentator, journalist, correspondent, announcer, videographer, or other individual regularly engaged in obtaining, writing, reviewing, editing, or otherwise preparing news for any newspaper, periodical, press association, newspaper syndicate, wire service, website, radio or television station, or other news service. Any individual employed by any such news service in the performance of any of the above-mentioned activities shall be deemed to be regularly engaged in such activities.

4. "**Medium of communication**" includes any newspaper, other periodical, book, pamphlet, website, podcast, news service, wire service, news or feature syndicate, broadcast station or network, cable television system, video, live stream, or other record.

5. "**Processing**" includes compiling, storing and editing of information.

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6. "**Published information**" means any information disseminated to the public by the person from whom disclosure is sought.

7. "**Unpublished information**" includes information not disseminated to the public by the person from whom disclosure is sought, whether or not related information has been disseminated, and includes, but is not limited to, all notes, outtakes, photographs, video clips or other data of any type not itself disseminated to the public through a medium of communication, whether or not published information based upon or related to such material has been disseminated.

LA 13-12, eff. April 20, 2012.

§ 24. Protection of sources and other information—Exceptions

A. No journalist shall be required to disclose in a Cherokee Nation proceeding either:

1. The source of any published or unpublished information obtained in the gathering, receiving or processing of information for any medium of communication to the public; or

2. Any unpublished information obtained or prepared in gathering, receiving or processing of information for any medium of communication to the public, unless the court finds that the party seeking the information or identity has established by clear and convincing evidence that such information or identity is relevant to a significant issue in the action and could not with due diligence be obtained by alternate means.

B. This section does not apply with respect to the content or source of allegedly defamatory information, in a civil action for defamation wherein the defendant asserts a defense based on the content or source of such information.

LA 13-12, eff. April 20, 2012.