

Other Views

Google's monopoly isn't a game for newspapers

It is no secret that Google has secured a near monopoly in the search and local advertising world. However, the impact on newspapers hasn't been quite as obvious.

A number of lawsuits have recently been brought that call Google to task for its practices. These lawsuits signal the government's acknowledgment of

Google's unfair practices and initiate steps to hold it accountable.



DEAN RIDINGS  
AMERICA'S NEWSPAPERS

The first suit, an antitrust action filed by the Justice Department in October, accuses Google of abusing its position over smaller rivals by operating like an illegal monopoly through exclusionary agreements that have hurt consumers and competitors.

The second suit, an antitrust suit filed in mid-December by Texas and nine other states, alleges that the company has stifled competition and enjoys monopolistic power, specifically as it relates to digital advertising.

The third suit, filed just days after the second suit by 38 U.S. states and territories, accuses Google of abusing its market power to maintain its search engine dominance. The suit doesn't seek monetary damages, but instead seeks broader remedies and an order to end any agreements or other behavior that it finds to be exclusionary.

But why does this matter, and what does it mean to you or to your community?

Almost everyone uses Google in some way or another. It has become part of our lives, and Google has used this to its advantage. Google games the marketplace through search algorithms to its financial gain. The result is an uneven and often unfair playing field for small and local businesses. At a time when local businesses are struggling to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to be able to compete fairly has never been greater.

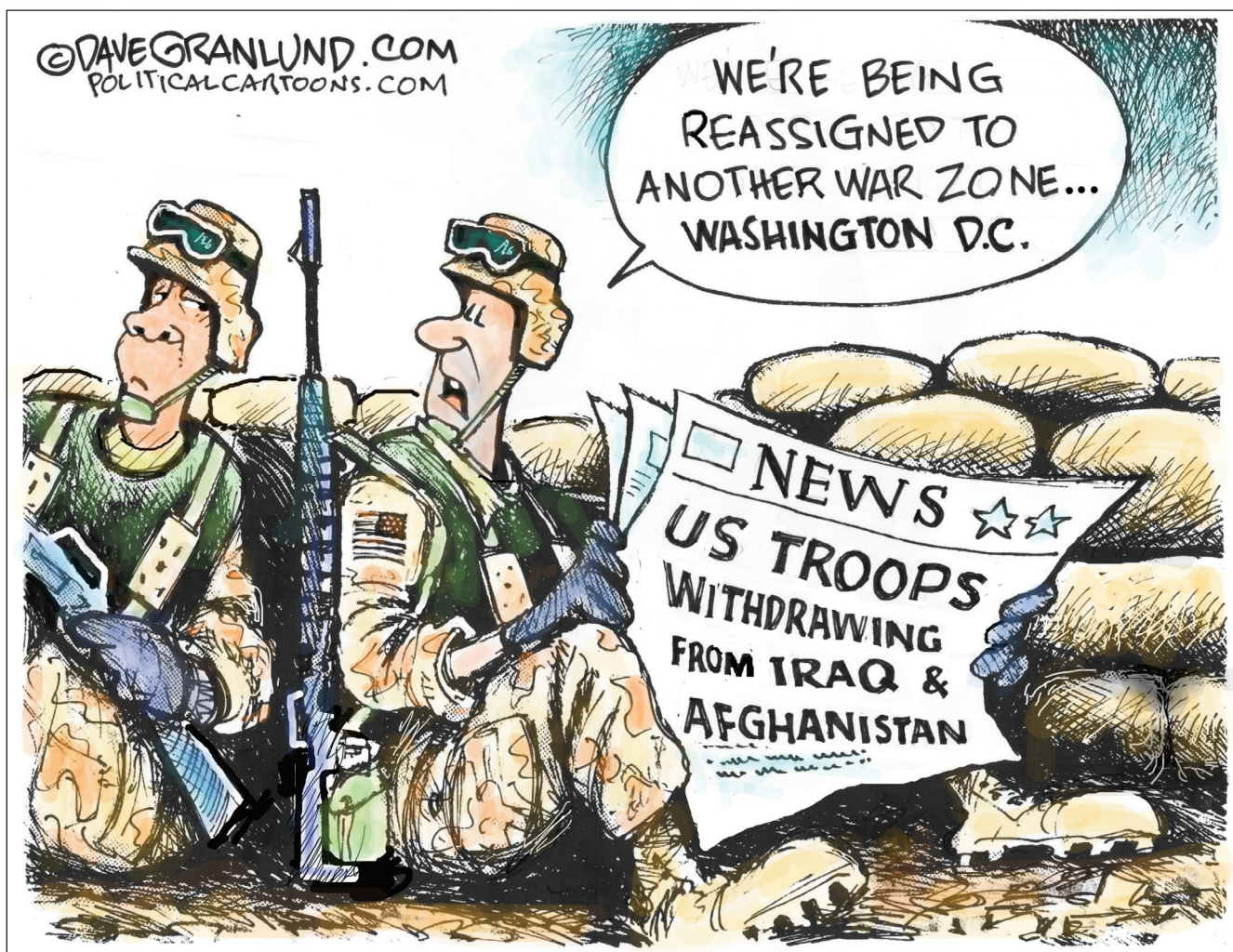
But what it means to local news, including this newspaper, is that Google uses content from newspapers and other news providers without compensating the publisher. If you use Google to seek information about current events in your community, chances are, the results will be from your local newspaper and other news providers. Google monetizes the content produced by the publishers, creating even more problems for an industry that was already challenged as a result of changing news consumption habits in an internet-connected world.

The shift to digital readership has been inevitable. However, the use of locally produced content by Google without adequate compensation has accelerated a financial crisis in the newspaper industry — forcing newspapers to make reductions. If the local newspaper goes away, Google doesn't replace the content. It just has less viable responses to searches for local information. The ultimate result is significantly diminished coverage in local communities on the issues that matter most — local government, schools, health, environment and all the issues that impact local citizens day in and day out.

A successful newspaper is critical to the health of a local community. Encourage your representatives in Congress to support legislative action to require Google to play by the rules and fairly compensate newspapers for the content they develop.

If it is allowed to continue its unfair business practices, there is no passing go or collecting \$200 for local communities as Google continues to monopolize the board.

*Dean Ridings is CEO of America's Newspapers, an association committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life.*



Letters

Disappointed with Observer's choice of content

The Observer is losing the support of me and, I suspect, a large portion of its reading audience. The Jan. 12 edition reached a new low with its withering attack on two of our finest public servants, Tom Insko and U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz.

This community is so fortunate to have someone of Insko's caliber to step into the shoes of president of Eastern Oregon University. Most hometown newspapers support their college and its leaders and sing their praises. Not The Observer. It stirs the pot and creates discord. Most newspapers recognize that a person's salary is a rather private matter, even for public officials. Your reporting of Mr. Insko's salary and then comparing it with the salaries of others did little other than to fan the flame of envy and jealousy.

If you are going to delve into these matters, the salary of other public leaders should also be considered for publication such as city managers, school superintendents, etc. And, while you are at it, why not give us the salaries of your editor, publisher, reporter, etc., so we can be sure our subscription and ad monies

are being responsibly used?

If that were not enough, you had to publish a series of letters critical of our new congressman, Cliff Bentz. I have known Rep. Bentz for years and know him to be a person of impeccable integrity. He will be a great representative for us in Washington, D.C. His views on President Donald Trump remaining in office until the end of his term and his vote on the electoral results in Pennsylvania were well considered and represented the position of most of his constituents. To my dismay, The Observer was able to assemble an editorial page full of hateful letters and cartoons, not just disagreeing with Rep. Bentz, but going so far as to accuse him of causing terrorism. All of this follows a familiar pattern of some to intimidate and harass anyone who follows a conservative path.

If I were asked to suggest ways the newspaper could improve, I would recommend that it engage in some real reporting. Send reporters to the meetings of the city council, county commissioners, planning commission, etc., and give us the news of what is going on in our local government that directly affects the reader. The Observer used to do that

kind of reporting in the past; they need to do it again.

Warner Wasley  
La Grande

Distinct pronouns are not necessary

Again the Liberal idiocy reigns supreme in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate regarding pronouns or distinction of sexes. If you really believe science, then you must agree that humans belong to the animal kingdom. Therefore humans are animals.

When people talk about animal distinctions they use "he" and "she" or mare and stallion, or sow and boar, etc. Often people call an animal "it." Therefore, let's consider each animal an "it," and thus each human should be considered an "it." After all, if you deny all humans "human tools" such as fire or spears or other weapons, or artificial structures for shelter, then all you have is a walking and talking meal for any opportunistic predator.

Humans are not special. Distinct pronouns are not necessary. If you are offended by being an "it," then grow up and get over yourself.

Rudy Candler  
Union

Write to us

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Unsigned editorials are the opinion of The Observer editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of The Observer.

LETTERS

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. We edit let-

ters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish consumer complaints against businesses, personal attacks against private individuals or comments that can incite violence. We also discourage thank-you letters.

Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's name, address and phone number (for verification only).

We will not publish anonymous letters.

Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.

Longer community comment columns, such as My Voice, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot and a one-sentence biography. Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal

attacks against private individuals. Submissions must carry the author's name, address and phone number.

Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

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