

Stevens introduces legislation to aid small newspapers in rural locations

Sen. Ted Stevens recently introduced legislation to restore reduced mailing rates for rural newspapers in the Lower 48 and maintain low postal rates for Alaska publications.

The bill is co-sponsored by Sen. Frank Murkowski.

The Rural Newspaper Preservation Act would make some newspapers eligible for the limited circulation postal rate, which was eliminated by Congress in 1985.

The limited circulation rate allowed newspapers and other publications to mail at a reduced postal rate if they circulated fewer than 5,000 copies outside the county of publication.

In addition to re-establishing the limited circulation rate, Stevens' legislation would redefine certain eligibility requirements for an even lower postal rate reserved for publications that mail subscriptions within the county of publication.

"Since 1851, Congress has recognized the importance of helping rural newspapers survive in a market increasingly dominated by regional and national media," Stevens said. "This legislation will not provide a windfall to small newspapers, but simply would help assist them to com-

pete with the national media while providing the local news coverage so essential to rural subscribers."

He also said the legislation is particularly important in Alaska, where small newspapers are an important source of timely news.