

# Remember 'Super Bowl' is registered trademark

*Don't let advertisers use sports phrases*

**N**ow that the end-of-the-year holidays are past us, the newspaper advertising staffs will begin gearing up for the Super Bowl festivities that will come the first of February. So perhaps now is a good time to once again issue the reminder that while news stories can discuss the Super Bowl as often as desired, your advertisers need to tread carefully in this area if you don't want to generate nasty letters or worse for your newspaper.

The words "Super Bowl," like their cousins "Final Four," "Sweet Sixteen," "Elite Eight" and other such sports phrases are all registered trademarks. When an advertiser

uses them in advertising, that advertiser needs to be a company that is an official supporter of the Super Bowl 2012 event.

If your local grocery store wants to sell chips and dip for residents to consume while watching the event on Feb. 5, the grocery store needs to find a euphemism or synonym for that event. Maybe it's something like "the big game" or maybe it's the "super event" that weekend.

**I**f your advertiser is unhappy, just remind him that the use of a trademark like the ones mentioned above, when you are not authorized to use it, can generate anything from a nasty letter from the owner of the mark to a lawsuit. Nobody wants to deal with those kinds of headaches, and because the newspaper would be drawn into the battle, it's just easier to pick something else for the ad.

Also the first of the year brings with it the opening session for the Missouri legislative bodies. We've not had a bill revising the sunshine law for several years, and there is reason to believe that perhaps this year such a bill can gain

some traction in the legislature.

I've been working with the association on what changes we might like to see in the law, incorporating suggestions that have come from many of you in the past few years.



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At the same time, we all realize that we never get everything we want, and the process is long and drawn-out. It involves a bill being filed by a sponsor, hearings in both the House and the Senate, and hoping the bill can move through the process to get onto the floor and up for a vote in each chamber. Finally, a version must be crafted that is acceptable to legislators in both chambers and which can be presented to the

governor for signature.

**E**ach of you plays an important part in this process. You may be asked to come to Jefferson City to testify. You absolutely are needed in Jefferson City on Missouri Press Day at the Capitol in order to talk to your legislators and to listen to the governor and others about bills of interest to you and your readers.

(This event is planned for Feb. 9. I'm hoping you will get it on your calendars NOW and make a special effort to attend. Don't forget there will be a reception the night before where legislators are invited to attend, and you should plan to come in early enough to attend that event, too!)

Finally, and most importantly, I urge you to watch for emails from Doug Crews and others advising of the status of the bills and asking for your calls to your local legislators. Those last-minute emails come when you are busy, I'm sure, but they are our way of keeping you advised as to what is happening up to the moment in the legislative process.

And when YOU pick up the phone to call your local legislators and ask for their support of the bill at the moment those emails request such a call, you are making the difference in whether this bill passes or not. Legislators tire of seeing the faces of lobbyists and executive directors of organizations who frequent their offices day by day. But when YOU call, they listen. They know you are able to generate publicity for them in your local papers that will help them in their campaigns and in getting word out to their constituents as to whether they are doing a good job for the local voters in their districts.

This is an election year. They will be especially listening to local voices. Be

one of those local voices. Give them a call when we request those calls be made. Let them know you are interested in what they are doing in Jefferson City. Play the part created by the legislative process for voters like you to play. Make your voice heard!

As always, wishing all of us a strong, profitable year in an industry that is undergoing great change. What all of you do is critical to ensuring liberty and justice in this country. My longtime friend and former editor, Paul McMasters, once said, "...the tradition that has kept the press necessary and vital ... is that the more the public knows, the more secure the individual."

Have a wonderful 2012!

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