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[ANNUAL
CONVENTION](#)

[CONTESTS](#)

YOU NEED TO NOTICE

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By Jean Williams

Newspapers and news associations have been aware that the government has been pushing for an online presence for legal notices for some time, and a Jan 1., 2015, deadline was set earlier this year.

Public and legal notices, in a victory for the Colorado news industry, will still be published in newspapers. However, uploading them to the

Public Notice Colorado website will be required by law as a second step in the process. Colorado Revised Statutes 24- 70-103 states, "When any legal notice is required by law to be published in any newspaper, the newspaper publishing the notice shall, at no additional cost to the person or entity placing the notice, place the notice on a statewide web site established and maintained by an organization representing a majority of Colorado newspapers as a repository for the notices."

Colorado Press Association is that organization. CPA CEO Jerry Raehal said: "There's been a growing tide of government agencies that have made the argument that they should just post legal and public notices online; this was our response to say we understand that there is a digital age and people want to take advantage of that, and that we can take the legal notices that are in the papers and, in addition, put them online." The Colorado Press Association's office manager, Lisa Woodworth, in conjunction with Jeanette Chavez, is working to train newspapers on website use and start the process of uploading their legal notices. Woodworth said of the imperative nature of starting as soon as possible, "It's not optional; it's by law and they could lose their legal newspaper status. It's very important that [the newspapers] get on board with this."

Although newspapers that print legal notices must upload the notices to the website starting Jan. 1, they can begin as soon as they have completed the online training, something Woodworth encouraged. One of the benefits of the Public Notice Colorado is that it keeps newspapers as the public record keeper for legal and public notices. One of the options originally considered was the government keeping their own public notice website, which Raehal pointed out is "the fox guarding the henhouse." Newspapers are a necessary third- party for accountability.

For questions about Public Notice Colorado, contact Lisa Woodworth at 720-274-7170 or coloradopress@colopress.net.