

Voters to decide if county should halt newspaper job ads

By John Best | For lehighvalleylive.com
 Email the author
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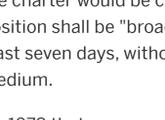
[Northampton County](#) spends more than \$200,000 per year on legally required advertising for jobs, meetings, budgets, bids and other governmental business, according to county [Controller Stephen Barron](#).

Officials are looking to rein that in.

Northampton County Council voted last week to place a referendum question on the November ballot that seeks to end the practice of advertising for county jobs in newspapers and instead rely on online job postings.

Barron said since 1998, the county has averaged paying The Express-Times a total of \$93,000 per year and The Morning Call in Allentown \$115,000 per year for all of the county's public notice advertising, including job postings.

The county has a workforce of more than 2,000 people and the county's home rule charter, effective since 1978, states that jobs openings must be advertised in two newspapers of general circulation.



County broke labor law, board rules

If a majority of voters favor a referendum to end that, the charter would be changed to state each vacant job position shall be "broadly advertised" for a period of at least seven days, without identifying a specific medium.

"In 1978 that was very sound reasoning," Barron said about newspaper ads. "You couldn't not advertise a job to hide the position from somebody, so nobody would apply, so you could hire your friend."

Barron said he would argue that today, if you publish a job in the paper, you are reaching fewer people than an online ad. He said the charter needs to be modernized.

Express-Times Publisher Al Kratzer said job ads in the newspaper also go online on lehighvalleylive.com -- products that reach hundreds of thousands of people in the Lehigh Valley market.

Advertising jobs through national job sites don't deliver that local audience or a print component and are more expensive, he said.

Council voted 9-0 to put the question on the general election ballot. Council also discussed investigating a move to online postings on the county website for all other business for which it currently buys advertising.

However, [Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association](#) law counsel Melissa Melewsky said she believes council's efforts do not have legal standing.

The Newspaper Advertising Act, a Pennsylvania state law, states that whenever a county or municipality is required to give public notice, it must use a newspaper of general circulation.

"For consistency, you can't have a mishmash of public notice laws," Melewsky said.

State law would supersede any amendment the county makes to its charter, which would be open to legal challenges, according to Melewsky.

Melewsky said the intent of the law is so the public notice process remains independent of government.

Melewsky said PNA data shows Pennsylvania's printed and online newspapers reach 83 percent of adults statewide every week.

Significant portions of seniors, low-income households and people with disabilities, who do not use the Internet, would be disenfranchised by ending the practice of printed advertising, she said.

John Best is a freelance writer. Find [lehighvalleylive on Facebook](#).

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Advertisement banner with a red-to-orange gradient background.

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underfed 7 days ago
 and what do u do with the people who are not online „I know „Bernie will give them free access and a computer so u dont know what its like to work for it !!!

Pull Faster 8 days ago
 The Newspaper Association will fight this and lobby at the National level against it. Government advertising is their cash cow that keeps them afloat. Taxpayers are subsidizing sub-standard rags that no longer do any investigative journalism and only rehash old news scraped from the Internet and television media.

NitRomney 8 days ago
 "Northampton County spends more than \$200,000 per year on legally required advertising for jobs, meetings, budgets, bids and other governmental business, according to county **Controller Stephen Barron**."

GREAT IDEA!!!!

That's \$200K more to divvy up on County Salaries and Benefits!! Mmm, more money for the select few!!

Where would the savings go? REALLY, we all know the answer!

SINCE WHEN is any government, looking to save money???

Seems to me every year we keep finding out about double-dipping government employees and the incredible waste associated with how government spends OUR money.

So why give money to newspaper's to actually help try to sustain their business model with "legally required" actions. Just change the rules and spend that \$200K on perpetual tax increase machinery called government.

Trump really may be onto something, time to change how government does things!!

republicanman 8 days ago
 Maybe they should also

Post a vote for small towns to merge into a county police department.... Get rid of small town politics (like the problems they occur in Nazareth) and have a larger, more organized police force that can better cater to the public.

Schmux 8 days ago
 Time to put more things at a county level. Not under the current set up, that would have to be completely overhauled.

County wide policing is a start.

I would go a lot further. Any municipality over 25 k population becomes a city. No boroughs, no townships, just cities. Non cities become unincorporated areas under county government. A city would have its own PD and fire/EMS if it chooses or it could use the county system which would cover all the unincorporated areas.

Then a county school board separate from the county municipality. This could go a long way to equalizing school funding.

Pennsylvania is the most over governed state in the USA, why does Wilson Boro need an 8 person council? Why do we have boros of 500 pop?

Small town politicians will fight the loss of their fiefdoms and cry all the way to Harrisburg. But kiddies, this state is broken and somebody needs to come up with a better plan.

floydfloyd 7 days ago
 @Schmux And while we're at it, why does each county have more than one school district? Other states do just fine (often with better schools) with one school district per county. But it will never change, since PA is the land of "we've always done it that way before".

Schmux 8 days ago
 It's time to move this state into the modern age. Sounds like a reasonable proposal to save money.