

Editorial Make drilling permit application public (5.21.12)

Every aspect of drilling for oil and natural gas is sparking interest among Ohioans, who want to know as much as they can about the economic and environmental impacts of this booming industry. Some of these concerns are addressed in Senate Bill 315, Gov. John Kasich's energy bill, but one is not: requiring public notice when a drilling permit is sought.

Public notice in newspapers and-or on the Internet was removed from another bill, but legislators still can add it to SB 315. This bill has passed the Senate and is expected to be voted on by the House Public Utilities Committee early this week.

A provision suggested by the Ohio Newspaper Association would involve publication of the full notice in a newspaper in the county where the permit is sought. This could be followed by an abbreviated version in a newspaper that includes a Web link to the full notice.

Using both media platforms would reduce the cost of the notice while providing the information where Ohioans have said they would look for it. A survey commissioned by ONA in 2011 indicated that 53 percent of those polled prefer to see such notices in newspapers;

22 percent said they would go to the Internet.

This approach already is included in a pending bill involving telephone regulation. Legislators approved a similar process as part of the 2011-2012 state budget bill.

Rep. Christina Hagan, R-Marlboro Township, is a member of the House committee that will vote on the bill this week. Rep. Hagan wrote in a recent letter to editor of The Rep on another issue: "When crafting legislation, I always lean on the side of transparency, and I recognize the importance of open records in state government."

We hope to see her support the addition of a public-notice provision — a key measure of transparency in this government-