

Times Reporter.com, Guest opinion Make energy bill fully transparent (5.22.12)

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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 was expected to be voted on by the House Public Utilities Committee 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 reduces 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 2011-12 state budget bill.

We hope to see the State House support the addition of a public-notice provision — a key measure of transparency in this government-regulated process — to the energy bill.

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