

Prescott News, Op-Ed HB 2403 is Dead (2.20.12)

The BIG PRESS monopoly on Public Notices lives for another day.

HB2403 is dead. The bill that was being drafted to address the BIG PRESS monopoly of public notices died in committee on a 2-5 vote. While I will admit the bill was not in useable form, we were working toward language that would have started addressing the one-sided and outdated requirement that only paper publishers can handle public notices. With the movement to the internet and electronic media it is only logical to revisit statutes that have been in effect since the start of this country and state. There are nearly 300 pages of regulations that deal with the format and frequency of the notices. This will be revisited in the future.

There was plenty of testimony on how the founding fathers praised the newspaper and “selected” them as the bearer of the news. Let’s try to forget that the internet, radio, and television had not been invented yet. The lobbyists were quick to discount this fact.

There was a lot of talk of distrust of the government (most of that I share) and only a 3rd party publication can be trusted to provide the vital information.

There was a lot of talk how the printed copy is the best way to reach all of the people. I questioned an individual on the data that attempted to show 75% of the people of this state look at a paper at least twice a week and I asked him what the percent he would accept was. His answer was 50% + 1. The information provided to me on the subscription rate throughout the state is around 18%. (the numbers just don’t add up).

Finally, Wendy Briggs displayed some guts and told us that they make a PROFIT and there is nothing wrong with that. Plus, When asked if the paper will still publish the notices if there were no money, her answer was NO. I guess chivalry is dead also.

I didn’t even go into the (so-called) polling done by the papers, from their customers. Somehow 40 responses from over 7,770 customers was noteworthy to them.

My goal was to focus on the technology and not the cost. This type of legislation had been tried before many times and fail, because it was focused on the money. I am still committed to opening this up to all types of media, to include online publications. There are still many areas that need to be addressed and Representative Proud has some very important concerns and suggestions that will be addressed.

I can only relate this experience to a limerick. I'm no Black Bart but here it goes:

There once was lobbyist for the Press

Discussing How to get around this mess

Because, it sure is sweet

Sucking on the government teat

And telling them it's for their best