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House subcommittee rejects bill to change public notices

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Posted: Friday, January 25, 2013 12:00 am | Updated: 5:55 pm, Fri Jan 25, 2013.

BY JOHN REID BLACKWELL Richmond Times-Dispatch

A House of Delegates subcommittee on Thursday voted against legislation that would have made it optional for many local governments in Virginia to publish public notices in newspapers.

However, another bill that would shift local government procurement notices from newspapers to the state's central procurement website advanced from a different House subcommittee.

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The House Counties, Cities and Towns subcommittee rejected legislation sponsored by Del. Christopher T. Head, R-Roanoke.

Head's bill, which had been combined with similar legislation by Del. Mark L. Cole, R-Spotsylvania, would have allowed governments in localities of more than 30,000 people to post legal notices on their websites instead of in local newspapers.

Local government groups such as the Virginia Municipal League supported the legislation, while organizations such as the Virginia Press Association and Virginia Coalition for Open Government opposed it.

The legislation failed despite several amendments designed to ensure that localities posted notices prominently on their websites and provided mobile versions and email alerts to people who requested them.

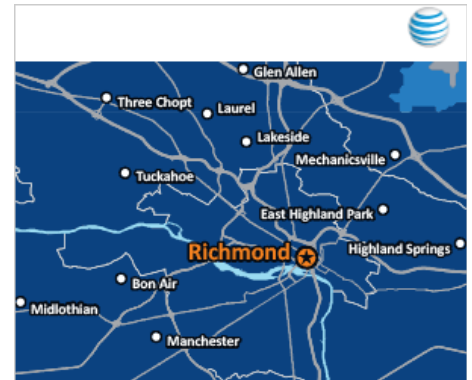
In a separate hearing, the House General Laws subcommittee endorsed a bill introduced by Del. Ron Villanueva, R-Virginia Beach, which would require local governments to post procurement notices on the state's central electronic procurement website. Publication of the notices in a local newspaper would be optional.

jblackwell@timesdispatch.com

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