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## Bill would let agencies use website for public notices

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Written by  
**Jerick Sablan**  
Pacific Daily News

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Lawmakers yesterday held a public hearing on a bill that would create a new website to post government meeting notices and amend the Open Government Law to make it optional for the government to continue to publish those notices in local newspapers.

Vice Speaker Benjamin Cruz, D-Piti, the bill's sponsor, said two local newspaper publishers approached him, expressing concern about the bill.

Cruz said the publishers were concerned that removing government notices from newspapers would prevent a significant number of residents from seeing those notices.

In written testimony submitted yesterday, Pacific Daily News

President and Publisher Rindray Limtiaco provided information about the newspaper's readership and the importance of reaching out the public.

"They gave very good arguments," Cruz said.

However, Cruz said it costs thousands of dollars a year for the government to buy ads for public notices. He said the government's current financial situation means cuts need to be found, and his bill would save money.

Sen. Ben Pangelinan, D-Barrigada, said he spends about \$10,000 a year on ads in print

publications for his public hearings. He is chairman of the Legislature's finance committee.

Pangelinan said it's a small price to pay to get the information out.

"I want to follow the spirit of the law and get as much public participation as possible," Pangelinan said.

He said even if the bill becomes law, he would continue to publish meeting notices in print.

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The governor's office has created a website similar to the one proposed in Cruz's bill, said Troy Torres, the administration's director of communications.

A calendar website recently was created for government agencies to post their meetings, events and other information, Torres said. The site still is improving and residents can expect to see more information in the coming weeks, he said.

Cruz's bill also would mandate online notices to meet the requirements of the Open Government Law.

The law currently requires public notification in print.

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