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# Az House OKs allowing cities to post public notices online

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Julia Shumway Cronkite News Service

The state House on Monday advanced a bill that would allow local governments to post public notices on their own websites instead of paying to publish them in newspapers.

Rep. Warren Petersen, R-Gilbert, who authored the bill, said newspapers aren't the most effective way to provide such information to the public.

"Most people don't get the newspaper," he said.

HB 2533 ([http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2533p.htm&Session\\_ID=110](http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2533p.htm&Session_ID=110)) failed last Thursday but passed 31-27 on reconsideration Monday, sending it to the Senate.

Rep. Karen Fann, R-Prescott, who originally voted against the bill, said she changed her vote after Petersen agreed to amend it in the Senate to cut newspaper publication requirements in half rather than eliminate them.

Fann said on the floor that the change would strike an appropriate balance because not everyone can access the Internet.

"Regardless of which medium you use, you will be notified," she said.

Current state law requires requires statutory public notices, which include zoning ordinances, bids for construction and street and highway improvements, to run for four consecutive days in a daily newspaper or two consecutive weeks in a weekly publication.

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Petersen's planned amendment would cut this to two consecutive days in a daily and one week in a weekly publication.

Rep. Lisa Otondo, D-Yuma, who voted against the measure, said the intent of state law on public notices was to have them handled by independent third parties that provide accountability.

"Transparency can't be 50-50," she said.

Calls to the Arizona Newspapers Association weren't returned after the vote.

Meanwhile, the House failed to pass a similar bill ([http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2483p.htm&Session\\_ID=110](http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2483p.htm&Session_ID=110)) authored by Rep. David W. Stevens, R-Sierra Vista, after Stevens amended it to require public notices to appear in an area's largest newspaper in terms of circulation and to cap rates.

"I'm waiting for someone to tell me why publishing a notice in a newspaper of 48 subscribers is the best way to notify the public," Stevens said.

The measure failed on a 39-18 vote.

Rep. Bob Robson, R-Chandler, who voted against Stevens' bill, said on the floor that the amendment was "totally unconstitutional" because it would cap rates and interfere with First Amendment rights.

Stevens' attempts to push similar measures a year ago failed to make it through the Legislature. A 2010 move to roll back public notice requirements was also thwarted by newspaper publishers.

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## Comments

There are no comments on this report. Sorry, comments are closed.



## Public notice examples

- Bids for construction
- General public improvements
- Community facility improvements
- Street and highway improvements
- Increase in water or sewer rates
- Zoning ordinances
- Award of contracts

- Notice of intent to contract
- Calls for bids on district bonds
- Election of board directors