

Preserve public notices in newspapers

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For more than 30 years, ***Pueblo Publishers Inc.*** has been publishing public notices for the City of Glendale and private individuals notifying the public about their articles of incorporation. That could all change if certain legislators have their way. And, it could all happen within the next week or so if two bills pass the Arizona House and Senate and are signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer.

The first bill, HB 2533 (Local Governments; Public Notices: Website), sponsored by Rep. Warren Peterson (R-Gilbert), gives cities, towns and counties the option of posting public notices currently required to be published to their websites (or, if they don't maintain a website, to the website of an association of cities and towns or counties, respectively).

The second bill, HB 2483 (Public Notices; Publishing; Public Medium), sponsored by Rep. David Stevens (R-Sierra Vista) contains 574 pages, and replaces hundreds of statutory references to "newspaper" with the term "public medium," which is defined by page 274 of the bill with the earlier statutory definition of "newspaper."

Stevens filed a similar bill during last year's legislative session. The Arizona Newspaper Association has stated the presumed intent is to eliminate or at least modify newspaper publication of public notices. We agree with the ANA, and oppose this bill.

Right, you're probably thinking. Newspapers are afraid they will lose all that money from public notices.

Wrong, and we will explain why. Note that public notices are in very small type, much smaller than ordinary type used in our newspaper articles. This is done at the request of the city or county that places a notice in our newspaper. They want the type to be as small as possible – while still big enough to read - to avoid paying large sums of money for the notice.

Even with the smaller type, the city pays a small per-line or per-word rate. This newspaper competes with other newspapers in a bidding process, and has, through the years, been able to offer the lowest bid to publish the city's public notices. The reason for that is your local community newspaper – ***The Glendale Star*** - wants to ensure our readers get the notices delivered to them in their mailbox; their traditional U.S. Postal Service mailbox, to be clear.

With the advent of the Internet and all of the convenience it brings to the American populace, it is also expensive to maintain and keep updated. Yes, the city has employees in the information technology department who are capable of uploading public notices to the city's website. But to do that on an ongoing basis would require hiring a person dedicated to the job.

That may be the least of the concern, even given the fact a high-tech employee to handle the public notices information would likely require a substantial salary. Not so for public notices published in your local community newspaper. The cost to the city is minimal.

Without publication in your local newspaper, the cost goes beyond dollars and cents. It goes to the heart of public notice – the citizen. While technology has produced great advances in communication, it has not produced a better mousetrap when it comes to genuine, black and white paper than cannot be manipulated public notices printed by newspapers.

That is not a stretch or the product of an overactive imagination. The Internet is a wonderful tool. But it is not foolproof. Hackers by the thousands work diligently (while not working productively) to lay claim to upsetting the normal flow of information. It is the nature of the beast.

But newspapers operate by simply publishing notices in small type, available for everyone to see.

And, yes, they also publish their public notices on the ANA website, where anyone, whether they subscribe to this newspaper, or simply prowl for free information on this valuable site, can read public notices all day long every week.

The message is clear. Newspapers publish public notices and guarantee transparency. You do not have to search the web to know what is going on in your city.

We ask that you join us in preserving public notices for publication in newspapers. Call your state representatives today and let them know you want to keep reading public notices in newspaper format.

What may be helpful in whether you decide to support the newspaper industry in its battle with the Arizona Legislature, is the following report by *Editor & Publisher* reporter Mark Vruno, whose article appeared March 13, and the subject was Google's supposed pro-environment stance that urges individuals to go digital.

It seems newspapers may be the most environmentally friendly source of information after all.

In his article Vruno wrote:

"Why the outrage? For starters, some 1 million Americans count on the U.S. print industry for their paycheck each week, according to Michael Makin, president and chief executive officer of Printing Industries of America (PIA).

"On behalf of PIA's members, Makin wrote an open letter to Google chief executive officer Larry Page and executive chairman Eric Schmidt, that read, in part: 'While we appreciate that it is in your best and self-interest to operate in a digital world, inferring that going digital is better for the environment is not only inaccurate, it is irresponsible. The amount of energy that is used by servers and individual devices far exceeds that used in the production of printed goods, and the amount of energy required for electronic devices is increasing.'"