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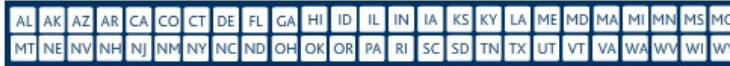
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# Public notice bill heads to a floor vote

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Written by  
**Chas Sisk**  
The Tennessean

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A bill that could settle a debate over how to notify the public about bids, meetings and other government actions is headed to the Senate floor.

The Tennessee Senate is scheduled to vote Thursday on [Senate Bill 461](#), a measure that will require newspapers to place public notices online starting in April 2014. The bill follows repeated debates between newspapers and lawmakers over how to publish notices as some readers shift from print newspapers to websites.

"This bill recognizes the growing use of [computers](#) but preserve the independence of public notice," the measure's sponsor, state Sen. Ken Yager, R-Harriman, said in a press release. "It combines the best of both worlds."

Committees in the state House of Representatives also have passed companion legislation. That measure could come up for a vote as soon as next week.

Backed by the Tennessee Press Association, the bill would require newspapers to post public notices on their sites free of charge, and they would also have to publish them on a statewide site. The TPA currently [operates such a site](#).

Often acting at the behest of local officials, Tennessee lawmakers have filed several bills in recent years to shift public notices from the newspaper classifieds to government websites. They argue that such moves will save local governments money.

One such measure, [House Bill 182](#), is making its way through the legislature. That bill would let the Tennessee Department of [Transportation](#) post requests for bids online, rather than in a newspaper. The shift would save TDOT about \$261,000 a year,



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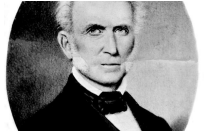
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according to a legislative analysis.

Opponents have argued that newspapers remain the best place to give public notice. Even with print readership declining, far more people visit news websites than government sites, they say. They also argue that newspapers can reach both households that own computers and those that do not, and they say publication in newspapers is verifiable in the event of disputes over whether the public has been given adequate notice.

The bill passed the Senate State and Local Government Committee unanimously on Tuesday. The companion version passed the House State Government Committee on a voice vote.

**Contact Chas Sisk at 615-259-8283 or [csisk@tennessean.com](mailto:csisk@tennessean.com). Ask him a question on Twitter [@chassisk](https://twitter.com/chassisk).**



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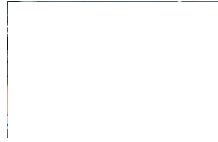


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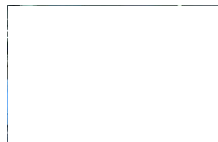
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