

# the Bulletin

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**PROMOTING PRESS FREEDOM SINCE 1868**

## NO PUBLIC NOTICE IN NEWSPAPERS BY 2025?

**"Public Notice Reform" Approved 8-4; Government Control of What You Know Moves a Step Closer**

The House Local Government Committee approved legislation (House Bill 5560) this morning that would allow government websites to be the sole repository for public notices across the state.

The legislation now heads to the full House of Representatives for consideration during the next nine days of "Lame Duck." If this bill becomes law, a phase out of newspaper notice will begin with the maximum required number of public notices for any government actions set at two insertions. In 2019 that number will drop to one. According to the legislation, by 2025 NO PUBLIC NOTICE IN NEWSPAPERS

will be required by state law and will only be necessary on governmental websites.

"While we knew that anything was possible during Lame Duck, we and many House Local Government Committee members were just plain puzzled why the chair (Rep. Amanda Price - R Holland) took up the bill today," said MPA Executive Director Mike MacLaren. "Conversations Lisa (MPA Public Affairs Manager Lisa McGraw) and I had with committee members in the House lobby yesterday had us thinking it was a strong possibility that the chair might even pull the bill from the calendar."

The committee released

a draft of the bill last night that, among other things:

- Eliminated the requirement that newspapers contain at least 25 percent news and editorial content per issue
- Eliminated the requirement that newspapers be published entirely in the English language
- Eliminated the requirement that free-circulation publications be circulated without interruption for at least two years in order to be eligible to run public notices.

"To me, this legislature is sending a clear message to the local newspapers of this state: don't confuse us with the facts when it comes to public notice and taxpayer trans-

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## Print and digital assets can yield revenue growth

**2015 MPA Annual Convention will highlight options**

Across the U.S., Small- to Medium-Sized Businesses are at a crossroads when choosing the correct marketing mix for their digital ad dollars. Simply, there are too many options and not enough time to make sense of it all. SMBs across Michigan are no different. They're seeking cost-efficient ways to build their brand, earn social respect, generate profits, and have a trusted partner implement it for them.

Marketing budgets are up nearly 20 per-

cent in the last year, Digital Ad Spending now comprises more than 25 percent of local advertising budgets, and more than 80 percent of socially-active SMBs expect to increase or maintain their social marketing presence. Further, local search revenues are expected to reach \$7.2 billion in 2015, up from \$7.1 billion in 2014.

For newspapers, it's never been more important to have a diversified portfolio of digital solutions to earn a share of the SMB budget. From

online banners, pre-roll video and native advertising, to search, social, e-mail marketing and mobile, newspapers have a huge opportunity to leverage their brand in getting the business. Equally important, today's digital landscape also requires sales specialists to approach prospecting in a whole new way. They've got to be socially connected to be socially accepted.

Michigan Press Association is formulating plans to bring options for print and digital marketing solutions to the 2015 Annual Convention in Grand Rapids. For detail, contact Mike MacLaren at 517-372-2424 or [mike@michiganpress.org](mailto:mike@michiganpress.org).



## Public notice reform approved

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parency,” MacLaren said. “They’re saying they can predict the future, that technology will evolve the way they think it will and take it on faith that there will be significant cost savings in allowing government to control this vital information. I’ve yet to see ONE piece of legitimate evidence that says this will save government one cent. And when I see that some municipalities spend less than seventeen-hundredths-of-a percent of their budget on these notices, I begin to wonder what the real motivation is for this legislation.”

MacLaren suggested MPA members visit [www.controlofwhatyouknow.org](http://www.controlofwhatyouknow.org) to set the record straight on public notices in Michigan.

The members of the Michigan Press Association need to use the opportunity of the two week legislative break to reach out to their state representatives and convey the message that this is bad public policy. This bill would eliminate any third party verifi-

cation of what government is doing. Hiding things from the citizens of our state will become easier due to the lack of oversight.

We urge you to contact your state representative and tell them to vote NO on HB 5560. We also urge you to editorialize about this issue in the next two weeks (we will be sending a suggested editorial in the next day or so) and we ask that you talk to your local government officials to see if this is what they really want.

Please use the talking points and other materials MPA has put together for you in the public notice kit you received earlier this year (bright yellow folder) as you communicate with others. You can also find the contents of this package at [www.controlofwhatyouknow.org](http://www.controlofwhatyouknow.org).

Please call either Mike MacLaren or Lisa McGraw at 517-372-2424 or email [mike@michiganpress.org](mailto:mike@michiganpress.org) or [lisa@michiganpress.org](mailto:lisa@michiganpress.org) to let them know where your Representative stands on this issue.



## Uploading PDFs to Newz Group gives you a free, digital backup

Uploading your PDFs to Newz Group gives you a free, searchable digital backup of your newspaper, and it helps strengthen MPA's public notice website.

For simple instructions on sending your content to Newz Group, contact Roselie at MPA, 517-372-2424 or [roselie@michiganpress.org](mailto:roselie@michiganpress.org).

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# GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF WHAT YOU KNOW

**Government has the power to force citizens from their homes and decide where to locate hazardous facilities. It has the power to confiscate your property or throw you in jail.**

That's a lot of power.

It's trying to get more.

Your government claims it can save money by posting notices about tax increases, property seizure and new spending on its website. That seems well-intentioned. But doing that creates a system where **government is in control of what you know**. And there are plenty of other ways they can save money without putting taxpayer rights at risk.

Right now your newspaper prints these notices on pages **independent of government control**. Their pages can't be "hacked," disappear during a power outage or quietly updated to hide a mistake. These newspaper pages prove beyond the shadow of a doubt what government did, when it did it, how it did it and where citizens can learn more about the matter. They are proof-positive legal documents. They protect your rights.

Government websites put government in control of what we know. Citizens need an independent check and balance on the government that's supposed to serve them. Public notices in newspapers provide that.

**DON'T LET GOVERNMENT CONTROL WHAT YOU KNOW.**

**KEEP PUBLIC NOTICES WHERE THE PUBLIC NOTICES:**

**IN NEWSPAPERS**

**\*To learn more, visit [www.controlofwhatyouknow.org](http://www.controlofwhatyouknow.org)**

# - TALKING POINTS -

# GOVERNMENT CONTROL

# OF WHAT YOU KNOW.

That's **ONE** outcome of legislation to allow local government to post notices about property seizures, zoning changes and tax increases onto their own websites. Here's why that's a bad idea:

1. Nearly **TWO THIRDS** of Michigan voters oppose the idea of letting government post legal and public notices online. So does the Michigan AARP, Teamsters and the Michigan Environmental Council.
2. Relying on the Internet alone to provide these notices could disenfranchise citizens (like elderly and lower income) who don't have the Internet.
3. Government groups say removing notices from newspapers saves money that can be spent on police and fire services. But they fail to say that **these notices are a miniscule amount of their operating budgets. In one municipality, the government pays more for baseball umpires (\$5,500) than on these notices (\$2,622.11).** In another, a city with a \$4 million budget pays \$680 - **.00017 of its budget** - in a given year. These same groups have yet to show **ANY** verifiable data on the net cost savings on such legislation and say that citizens can look at public and legal notices on the Internet at the local library. But a survey conducted in Wisconsin showed 89% of households never go to the public library to use the computer system to access news or information on local or state government.
4. Keeping public notices in newspapers protects taxpayer rights. Having a permanent and publicly-circulated record of government actions proves beyond a shadow of a doubt what formal action government did or didn't take. Websites can be hacked (New Jersey, the Defense Department, NASDAQ and the federal court system are recent examples).
5. Newspapers remain the main source of local news and important matters. According to 2011 research by EPIC-MRA, 49% of the people polled get this kind of news from their local newspaper as opposed to 3% who get it from the Internet. The research also showed that **70% of voters rarely visit a government website. Newspapers provide third-party verification that helps guarantee due process and provides a transparent and permanent record of these government actions.**
6. Public notices deal with matters affecting home values, special assignments or fees for local residents or small businesses. **These notices are legal documents.** Publishing them on government-run websites would open the door to legal challenge because you can't prove "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that a government website ran the notice without making **ANY** changes or without the site crashing. People could lose their homes or get a tax increase because someone thought they could save money by posting a notice on a government-run website. News-on-paper notice published in an independent publication provides **proof of publication.**
7. Michigan newspapers - which 87% of adults read during an average seven-day period - provide an **independent, authentic and permanent record of legal actions** taken by government and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that taxpayer rights are being protected.

**(November, 2014: Share these facts with your state legislators)**

