

NY newspaper publishers knock Cuomo's budget bill on public notices

POLITICS ON THE HUDSON

Joseph Spector, Westchester

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The New York News Publishers Association, which represents the state's newspapers, is opposing a budget proposal by Gov. Andrew Cuomo that would eliminate the requirement that constitutional amendments and ballot questions be published in local newspapers.

The group said it would be a hit to transparency to remove the newspaper requirement. The budget bill would require that the notices (http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=A03005&term=2015&Summary=Y&Memo=Y) are posted on the state Board of Elections website and the state Department of State's website for a minimum of three days prior to an election.

"At a time when there is general agreement that there is a need to increase transparency and accountability in state government, it is astounding that this provision is included in a budget bill," the group, which includes Gannett's newspapers, said in a memo of opposition.

Existing law requires that constitutional amendment notices be disseminated through a newspaper in each county of the state.

The governor's office anticipates a saving of \$342,000 a year to not have the notices in the papers, but publishers' association said that's a pittance compared to the lack of availability of the information to the general public through the newspapers.

"Total daily newspaper circulation in New York is approximately 5 million, and therefore the state might save a grand total of six pennies per reader by eliminating public notice," the memo continues.

The association said that newspaper notices are a permanent public record, while the notices could easily be removed from a website. Also, the group said, there are areas of the state with limited Internet service.

Cuomo's budget includes another measure that would end the requirement that certified copies of election results be published in local legal ads. The change would require the results

to be posted on a local board of elections' web site for a minimum three days.

"With on-site and immediate coverage of elections by news media, election results are made public as soon as they are available," the budget bill states. "Continuing the requirement to subsequently publish certified results is redundant and costly."

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