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They must be archived in an easily accessed format.

They must be accessible to everyone.

In 1789, the First Session of Congress required that all bills, orders, resolutions and votes of our new federal government be published in at least three newspapers. Those founders clearly understood a simple truth: You can't find a public notice if you don't know it exists.

Today there remains just one place that meets all those key criterion: your newspaper. Yet, Illinois lawmakers were mulling a bill that would have ended publication of ALL public notices in newspapers in favor of government websites. House Bill 6098, which will not be called for a vote this legislative session, would have allowed local governments to instead publish notices, agendas, records or other information on their own websites or on [data.illinois.gov](#).

We agree public notices belong online, so we backed a law requiring all such notices published in Illinois newspapers be posted on

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a statewide website at no extra cost to government or taxpayers. If you haven't visited the easily searchable [PublicNoticeIllinois.com](#), we urge you to do so. Then, imagine the chaos if such information were scattered across more than 8,000 online locations.

That's just one concern with a government takeover. There's also no guarantee public notices would remain easily found. Elected officials can, and do, bury information deep within their websites, accessible only by those who know where to look. And what of local governments, which do not have websites? They will have to pay to create and maintain them. Or they could do what a disturbing number of better connected governments do: Ignore state online post requirements.

Non-compliance will rise exponentially if governments alone control the means by which we learn of actions elected officials take to raise and spend our tax dollars. That's why putting notices of such actions solely in the hands of government should be anathema to all who believe in fiscally responsible, transparent government.

Critics say newspapers oppose such bills on financial grounds. It's true that public notices are important to our industry's bottom line. But that doesn't make them any less essential to the interests of the public. In fact, we regularly use public notices to help tell stories which are important to our community.

Lawmakers tethered to smartphones and government-issued laptops should note not everyone is so well connected. One in three Americans still did not have access to the Internet, the U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2013. It's far worse in rural areas, and among the poor, elderly, minorities and those living with disabilities.

Online publication of government notices serves best the Internet savvy political junky. As the Pew Research Center reported in 2010, only 11 percent of Internet users had ever visited a local government website.

Unlike the newspaper public notice, which the casual reader can see in the edition of the newspaper they hold in their hands, if the government succeeds in taking over public notices, notice of your home town's latest effort to raise property taxes is unlikely to appear on any newsfeed you access online.

So, how will citizens know to go looking for what they need to know when they need to know it? No doubt, that's what some seeking to eliminate newspaper publication of public notices are counting on.

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Posted in Editorials on Thursday, April 21, 2016 7:41 am.

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
today's events		browse		submit		

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What is your favorite Girl Scout cookie?

☐ Thin Mints

☐ Samoas (Caramel deLites)

☐ Tagalongs (Peanut Butter Patties)

☐ Trefoils (Shortbread)

☐ Do-si-dos (Peanut Butter Sandwich)

☐ Cranberry Citrus Crisps

☐ Lemonades

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Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language.

2Don't Threaten or Abuse.
Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated. AND PLEASE TURN OFF CAPS LOCK.

3Be Truthful.
Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.

4Be Nice.
No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.

5Be Proactive.
Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.

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