

Virginia Press Association

KEEP THE LIGHT ON PUBLIC NOTICES

DANGERS AND DEFENSES



Watch for these danger signals:

- Attempts by state and local governments to move notices to government websites under the guise of saving money.
- Reduction in the number of required foreclosure notices, or the required information within the notices.
- Self-storage industry pushing to remove abandoned/forfeited property notices.
- Attempts to alter the requirements for publications or other “official public notice providers.”
- False sense of urgency for moving public notices because “newspapers are dying.”
- Legislators claiming that “public notices are a taxpayer-funded subsidy for newspapers.” (Yes, someone actually said that on the record).

Defenses that have worked:

- Taxpayer-funded government should not be allowed to take business from small companies that have been successfully running notices for 100+ years.
- Do you really want to increase size and scope of government at the expense of private-sector jobs?
- Moving public notices to government websites makes finding them a research project.
- Count the number of government websites in any given county or location that would have to be surfed to find public notices.
- Point out instances of failed/non-functional/outdated government websites. These won't be hard to find when you start looking.
- Find citizens who have been spared losing a home or property because of finding notice in their local newspaper. Tell their stories.
- Yes, this is a revenue issue for newspapers. But our democracy was set up with a free press that monitors government activity, and we rely on government notices to continue to provide that public service. Would the public effectively be served by government selectively self-reporting? *Government cannot, and should not, notice itself.*
- Many areas still lack significant access to reliable Internet service, although this defense is going away quickly as localities move to close the “digital divide.”

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PRESS
Association

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