

**Testimony of Kevin Crosbie, Publisher of the Willimantic Chronicle newspaper,  
concerning Gov. Rell's recommendation to remove the state mandate for  
publication of municipal public notices in newspapers**

Chairwoman Harp, Chairman Geragoshen and Members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about Gov. Rell's suggested recommendation to remove the state mandate for publication of municipal public notices in newspapers.

I am Kevin Crosbie, Publisher of the Willimantic Chronicle daily newspaper and a past president of the Connecticut Daily Newspapers Association.

While I understand the goal of this recommendation is possible cost savings to municipalities during this budget crisis, I believe the unintended consequences of this proposal would be catastrophic to the public's right to know and to all good forms of open, involved government.

Since Colonial days newspapers have existed to inform the public about government activity. Newspapers have always provided an independent forum of laws, purchases, arrests and all forms of public notice. Newspapers are an independent forum accessible to all levels of society, verifiable in showing that public notice has occurred, and archival in a secure and readable format.

Posting notices only on a municipal website actually reduces accessibility while increasing the opportunity for tampering, after-the-fact publication and bias in communicating the government's business. Recent years have seen charges of Connecticut municipal bid rigging and election fraud and that can only increase with the sole visibility of public notices being on individual town websites. In addition, many residents do not have convenient or in fact, *any* access to the internet, making municipal websites unavailable to them.

Several years ago, to address universal accessibility, the Connecticut Daily Newspapers Association with the approval Connecticut town clerks created the website CTPublicNotices.org that lists all of the local public notices printed in Connecticut's newspapers on a daily basis. That means we already provide one complete, free, easily identifiable website for this purpose in addition to the printed newspaper record of public notice.

In my area I have not found one town official in favor of taking public notices out of newspapers. In fact, under the state law effective in October 2008, requiring towns with websites to make meeting agenda and minutes available on town websites, many of our towns removed their websites in fear of not being able to maintain compliance.

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My family has been publishing the Chronicle for 133 years. And while we have an economic incentive due to the advertising revenue that these notices provide to our newspaper, I can't stress enough the importance I feel about the role of newspapers and public notices in fostering good government.

I'd be happy to answer any questions about his issue.

Sincerely,

Kevin Crosbie  
Publisher  
The Willimantic Chronicle