



CCM 2013 Testimony

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

S.B. 1112, "An Act Concerning the Publication of Legal Notices by Municipalities"

CCM supports this bill.

SB 1112 would provide significant relief from a long standing and outdated mandate on towns and cities by *modifying* the requirement to post the full text of all legal notices in local newspapers.

SB 1112 would:

1. *Allow for publishing notice of the availability of a public document in local newspapers, along with a summary and clear instructions as to how to get additional information or the complete text of the document (municipal office where a hard copy may be obtained, a contact name and phone number that could be used to get more information, and the web address where an online version can be found).*
2. *Require newspapers to have a designated section for all such public notices to be listed in the publications' table of contents.*

The purpose of Section 1-2 of the state statutes is to ensure the public is provided information on governmental actions and issues that may impact them. To this end, municipalities spend millions each year publishing lengthy documents, in their entirety, in local publications.

The Internet has become a tool widely used for the dissemination of information on all levels. The State itself has moved to a paperless system in similar ways – the General Assembly several years ago stopped printing certain bills and legislative documents. Further, PA 12-92 requires proposed state agency regulations to be placed online, instead of published in paper form.

It is important to keep in mind:

- The Internet is *accessible to everyone*. Libraries are equipped with computers at no cost to users. Newspapers must be purchased.
- Internet sites *may be accessed from anywhere in the world, at any time*. Newspapers can only be purchased in the region they serve.
- Public notices placed on Internet sites *can remain indefinitely*, making the information available for a greater period of time. Notices placed in newspapers are there for only the period for which the newspaper is paid.

SB 112 would not hamper the public's right to know. Rather, it would create a more cost-effective and efficient manner in which to provide public information.

In the 21st century, the quickest, most transparent and cost-effective way to get information to the greatest number of residents, is the Internet. It is no secret that the Internet is where people shop, communicate, conduct financial transactions, socialize and share general information. *Municipal and state websites have become a critical lifeline that links living rooms to their governments instantly.* Despite advances, in 2013, Connecticut's hometowns continue to be mandated to post legal notices in printed newspapers with dwindling circulations.

Newspapers have had a captive client in municipalities for years and have taken advantage of this mandate by often charging their highest advertising rate. In addition, legal notices are not placed in an easily accessible manner in newspapers.

Make no mistake: the real issue is not access to public information – it's about money for the newspaper industry. If newspapers feel it's important to publish legal notices, they may continue to do so, as a public service, after SB 1112 is enacted.

With the State facing a large deficit and a state budget proposal that cuts over \$700 million in municipal aid, now is the time for the Legislature to enact serious mandates relief. SB 1112 would provide meaningful relief at no cost to the State.

CCM urges the committee to support and favorably report SB 1112.



If you have any questions, please contact Ron Thomas at rthomas@ccm-ct.org or (203) 498-3000.