CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT™

CCM 2014 Testimony

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM). 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.

SB 94 - ***"An Act Concerning the Publication of Municipal Legal Notices in Newspapers"***

CCM supports SB 94 which would provide significant relief from a long standing costly and outdated mandate on towns and cities by ***modifying*** **the requirement to post the full text of all legal notices in local newspapers.**

Municipalities are **not** ***seeking complete repeal*** of the law, but rather **a reasonable modification** as specified in SB 94. This bill **allow for publishing notice of the availability of a document in local newspapers**, along with a summary and clear instruction as to how to obtain additional information or the complete text of the public document.

CCM supports amending SB 94 to require that newspapers have a designated section for all public notices to be listed, for the benefit of readers, along with a listing in the publications' table of contents.

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

In the 21st century, the quickest, most transparent and cost-effective way to get information to the most amounts of residents is via the Internet. The Internet is where people shop, communicate, do their banking, and share general information. *Municipal and state websites have become a critical lifeline that link living rooms to their governments instantly.* Just like the rise of local cable access stations, the Internet and municipal/state websites have allowed governmental activities to emerge even further into the public spotlight. Despite these obvious advances, in 2014, Connecticut's hometowns continue to be mandated to post their legal notices in printed newspapers with dwindling circulations.

The Internet has become a tool widely used for the dissemination of a wide array 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, and PA 12-92 require proposed state agency regulations to be placed online instead of in paper form.

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It is important to keep in mind:

- The Internet is ***accessible to everyone.*** All local libraries are equipped with computers at no cost to the users. Newspapers must be purchased to be read.

- Internet sites ***can be accessed from anywhere in the world at any time.*** Newspapers are purchased in the region they serve.

- Public notices placed on Internet sites ***can remain there indefinitely***, making the information available for a greater amount of time. Notices placed in newspapers are only there for the allotted time paid for.

No one is seeking to hamper the public's right to know; rather towns and cities are seeking a more cost effective and efficient manner in which to provide information.

Newspapers have had a captive client in municipal government for years and have taken advantage of this mandate by often charging their highest advertising rate for postings. In addition, these legal notices are used as filler throughout the paper to take up excess space – they are not placed in a coordinated manner to allow readers ease of access to the information.

Municipalities continue to make sacrifices and explore ways to be more efficient and saving money. Now is the time for the legislature to enact meaningful mandates relief for towns and cities - at no cost to the State.

CCM urges the committee to ***support*** legislation to (1) **allow for publishing notice about the availability of a document in local newspapers**, along with a summary and clear instructions as to how to get additional information or the complete text of the public document, (2) allow notices to be published in **free, weekly newspapers** – and – (3) **require newspapers to have a designated section for all public notices** to be listed, for the benefit of readers, along with a **listing in the publications' table of contents.**

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, Senior Legislative Associate, at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or (203) 500-7556.