



Maryland | Delaware | DC Press Association

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To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Rebecca Snyder, Executive Director, MDDC Press Association

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Re: **HB 1428 - OPPOSE**

The Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association represents a diverse membership of newspaper publications, from large metro dailies such as the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, to hometown newspapers such as the Star Democrat and Maryland Independent, to publications such as The Daily Record, Baltimore Jewish Times, and online-only publications such as Bethesda Beat, MarylandReporter.com and Baltimore Brew.

The Press Association urges the Committee to reject HB 1428. This is a state-wide bill that would require passed local legislation (or a fair summary) to be posted physically on an official bulletin board OR on a website used by the county commissioners to provide information to the public. Further, the bill stipulates that the passed legislation only need stay on the government website for four weeks. This would be a change from current practice, where passed legislation is published in a newspaper of general circulation once a week for three weeks.

Public notices should be independent, accessible, verifiable, and reach the widest possible audience to ensure trust in the process and information. This bill is bad public policy and will short change the public's right to know.

Local government has a vested interest in ensuring that the public knows about new laws, among other topics, and that means publicizing to the largest possible audience. This bill takes notice of new laws out of the newspaper and its website (and its archive) and into a specific government website. The public looks for this type of information among other news and information, not in a website where the information is only available for a short period of time and does not reach a broad cross section of the public. This bill would also allow simply the posting of the law on a bulletin board in the government building.

This legislation also fails the other best practices of public notice. It is not independent, or verifiable, as websites can be hacked and inaccessible, and there is no provision for an affidavit.

The purpose of public notice is to prevent official actions from occurring in secret. Since the first session of the U.S. Congress in 1789, public notice has supported the principles of democracy, transparency and open government. Best practices for public notice include stipulations that the notices be **published independently of government**, in the context of other news of interest to the community, and in an archivable and verifiable format. I've included a booklet, "Public Notice: An American Tradition," that outlines effective public notice, and why it is so important.

We urge an unfavorable report.



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