

Legislation Removing Requirement for Public Notices Threatens Competition and Government Integrity

By The Citizens' Campaign
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The Citizens' Campaign raised concerns today about a bill being fast-tracked through the legislature and touted as a cost-saving measure, but at the end of the day results in less competition and less integrity in the government.

Bill S-2072/A-2082 allows municipalities to forego publication of public notices in a newspaper and instead enables them to publish on their own website. The bill was released from the Senate Budget Committee last week.

Citizens' Campaign Chair Harry Pozycki said, "Publication of government notices are a worthwhile expenditure that serves the public by providing a concrete record to hold government accountable and by informing citizens of government action. In today's fast-paced wireless world, websites can be edited or deleted by a single click of a mouse, with little or no oversight."

The Campaign also points out that it is counterintuitive for municipalities to solicit bids and proposals on their websites, when publication in a newspaper would reach a broader pool of potential bidders.

"When the talk of Trenton is government waste-cutting, we should be encouraging increased competition for lower cost contracts, not limiting it," said Pozycki.

Pozycki also noted that, the New Jersey Press Association provides an online search feature which pulls together every public notice published in the state, providing a statewide system for searching bids and local laws. Removal of public notices from newspapers would eliminate the ability of businesses to search bid opportunities.

Beyond transparency and accountability issues, there is still a large portion of citizens who wouldn't have access to online web notices. According to Pew Internet and American Life Project 26% of the American population still does not have internet access, and that number jumps to 62% when you look at internet users 65 and older.

The Citizens' Campaign is a non-partisan organization leading the Jersey Call to Service, a statewide campaign to replace New Jersey's culture of corruption and government waste with a culture of service and frugality.