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## Public notice bills threaten citizens' right to know

Story

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Posted: Thursday, January 24, 2013 1:02 pm

Citizens' right to know about government is being endangered by several bills in the General Assembly that would take public notices out of local newspapers and allow them to be published on government-controlled web-sites.

As the law stands now, lo-cal governmental bodies are required to publish notices about public hearings, re-zonings, requests for propos-als, elections, and other mat-ters of public concern as ad-vertisements in a paid-circulation newspaper in the community. Public notices help citizens learn about plans and actions that will affect them and their com-munity.

If these bills are approved, however, boards of supervi-sors and town councils would no longer have to publish notices in the local newspa-per. Instead, they could post them on government web-sites, which few people ever visit. In fact, more than half of the U.S. population say they have never reviewed a local, state, or federal web-site, according to the Public Notice Resource Center.

Of course, nothing is wrong with posting public notices on government web-sites, but that shouldn't be citizens' only way of learning about what government is doing, nor should government control the public notice process. Talk about the fox guarding the henhouse.

And let's not forget that not everyone uses or even has access to a computer or the Internet. These people would, in effect, be disenfranchised if public notices were only posted on the web.

Newspapers are readily available and accessible to everyone. We also offer an independent, impartial source of information that is not under government control.

Please help us continue to keep you informed. Write to your legislators and let them know you are against gov-ernment removing public notices from newspapers.

You can contact our local legislators at:

Del. Don Merricks, General Assembly Building, P.O. Box 406, Richmond, Va. 23218, [deldmer-ricks@house.virginia.gov](mailto:deldmer-ricks@house.virginia.gov), 804-698-1016;

Del. Danny Marshall, Gen-eral Assembly Building, P.O. Box 406, Richmond, Va. 23218, [DelDMarshall@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelDMarshall@house.virginia.gov), 804-698-1014;

Sen. Bill Stanley, Senate of Virginia, 3rd Floor, Room 313, P.O. Box 396, Rich-mond, Va. 23218, [dis-trici20@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:dis-trici20@senate.virginia.gov), 804-698-7520;

Sen. Frank Ruff Jr., Senate of Virginia, P.O. Box 396, Richmond, Va. 23218, [sen.ruff@verizon.net](mailto:sen.ruff@verizon.net), 804-698-7515.

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