



Editorial: Public notice bill is best solution

Feb. 26 By [Independent Herald Staff](#) Filed Under: [Opinion](#) [no comments](#)

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State Sen. Ken Yager, R-Harriman, has introduced a bill in the Tennessee General Assembly that would both cement the requirement that government entities publish their notices in

newspapers of general circulation and ensure that those notices are widely available to everyone who wants to access them.

The bill was drafted by the Tennessee Press Association. It would require newspapers running public notices to also publish those notices on the newspaper's local website, as well as publish them to a state database.

The bill is in response to several years of lobbying by legislative efforts to move public notices to government and/or private websites.

Both purposes of the bill are important. The legislation ensures that public notices — which can include everything from whose property is being annexed by a municipality to who is applying for a permit to open a “beer joint” close to your home to government boards that are going to meet to hash out policies that impact everyone in the community; generally, things the public deserves to know — are available to everyone, even those who do not purchase a newspaper. Those notices will continue to be published by someone independent from local government bodies, which is an important safeguard against abuse of the public notice requirement. And, for the first time, at least in many communities, public notices will become “no purchase necessary” there will be no need to buy a newspaper to read them — although we certainly like it when you do.

Just as importantly, public notices will continue to be consolidated and easy to find. In Scott County there are two newspapers of general circulation; in Fentress and Morgan counties there is just one. On the other hand, there are six county or municipal governing bodies (and their assorted committees) in Scott County, along with four planning commissions, five utility districts and other boards. That does not include the notices to creditors and other notices required by law to be public. If each of those entities were permitted to publish those notices on each of their individual websites, it would become nearly impossible for the average citizen to stay abreast of the things that could impact their life.

Scott County Government currently publishes many of its public notices on its website, [www.scottcounty.com](#). Doing so makes it one of the more transparent county governments in rural Tennessee, and more local governments should follow suit. But it still isn't an ideal solution. Yager's legislation is.

We have taken the preemptive measure of publishing public notices on our website, [www.ihoneida.com](#), which would fulfill one of the additional requirements should the legislation currently before the General Assembly become law. While parts of our website will be restricted to subscribers beginning March 1, paid access will not be required to access the public notices.

The public's right to know is vitally important. Newspapers and lawmakers, working together, can

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- Yes. It's unfair to most teams to have it at the same location every year.
- No. Wartburg is a central location for all district teams.

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help protect that right.

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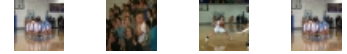
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