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North State Politics

By Travis Fain

A light-hearted look at North Carolina and Triad government. All politics is local, and mostly ridiculous..

[Return To Blog](#)

Newspapers face potential loss of public notice \$\$

2013-03-06T15:58:12 Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Updated 03:58PM

By Travis Fain

travis.fain@news-record.com

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A push to temper the long-standing requirement that local governments publish various public notices in newspapers seems to be gaining momentum in the N.C. General Assembly, with particular support from Piedmont legislators.

State Sen. Trudy Wade, R-Guilford and a former Greensboro City Council member, has filed [a bill](#) that would give

local governments the option of publishing in a newspaper or simply putting the notice online. Notices would also have to be emailed to anyone requesting them and be made available at public libraries and superior court clerks' offices. State Sen. Andrew Brock, R-Davie, is a co-sponsor.

This issue has been a passion for [Keith Brown, a local blogger](#) who filed open records requests to pin down just how much area governments spend to advertise public notices in the News & Record and other papers. I haven't verified his figures, but there's no doubt we're talking about a significant chunk of money across the state.

Said state Rep. John Faircloth, R-Guilford: "Very interesting."

Some of this money flows to big companies, like the one I work for. Some of it goes to small newspapers that are likely to have a lot of trouble replacing the revenue if their cities and counties opt to publish notices online. [Continue Reading](#)



State Rep. Alma Adams, D-Guilford, expressed this concern Tuesday, when the bill came up during a Guilford County legislative delegation meeting. State Rep. Pricey Harrison, D-Guilford, wondered about people who don't have a computer.

I'm not sure how many people who don't have a computer actually subscribe to a newspaper, or are regularly scanning free publications or free copies at the library for public notices. But I digress.

This bill was filed Monday. I don't think it's been referred to committee yet. It'd be a real hit for newspapers, even largish, medium-sized ones like the News & Record. It would seem to save taxpayers money, though the N.C. Press Association argues that there are new costs to keeping up a secure website and fulfilling the legal requirements of public notices.

The Press Association is, understandably, against this bill. It emailed members today to muster opposition, arguing in part that "public notices need to be public."

"Putting them on an obscure government web site – and most are – suggests the public has no right to know what the government is planning," the NCPA said.

UPDATE: I should have noted that the city of Greensboro specifically requested this legislation on this issue as part of its legislative package. It's also a legislative goal for the N.C. League of Municipalities.

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Previous Comments (5)...

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Wednesday, March 06, 2013

travis that is just the tax delinquency bill there is also foreclosures, local school board bids, government meetings and the ridiculous tax delinquency bill

Posted by Doug Johnson

Date: Wednesday, March 06, 2013

I am all for it. Save the MONEY! Is not you libs always hollering about evil corporations getting tax payers money?

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Wednesday, March 06, 2013

Here are some invoices <http://triadwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/repost-on-21877513-is-amount-guilford.html>

Posted by Robert Carter

Date: Thursday, March 07, 2013

We've come a long way from when notices were posted on the walls at the courthouse, to also including them in printed form in newspapers, to now in digital form on the web. People without access to newspapers or computers can still go to the courthouse (or have someone take them). But retaining a law which favors the economic well-being of newspapers is an example of favored legislation for one industry over another.

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Thursday, March 07, 2013

this is from your own editor gauger "Equally important has been the digital revolution. Time was when newspapers provided a public service by publishing news-of-record information, because your only other way to view it was to schlep to city hall or the courthouse. Now many governments publish public records at their websites. "

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