



The Ellsworth American • Courier-Gazette • Republican Journal • Mount Desert Islander • Camden Herald • The Free Press

State and Local Government Committee
Maine State Legislature
State Street, Augusta ME 04330

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Chris Crockett, I am the publisher of *The Ellsworth American, Courier-Gazette, Mount Desert Islander, Republican Journal, Camden Herald and The Free Press* and former president of the Maine Press Association.

I oppose LD 422, "An Act to Eliminate the Requirement That Municipalities Provide Public Notice in Newspapers"

Public Notices play a critical role in government accountability. Newspapers have a long history of providing third-party oversight of the state and local governments. This bill puts said oversight in jeopardy.

I understand that local governments continually strive to cut expenses, but public notices are not the right place to do that. From accessibility to accountability to simple oversight, a printed public notice ensures due process when a public meeting is being held or when a bid is needed. By limiting public notice exposure to just the municipal website, many services that are put out to bid will not reach as wide an audience and could result in less competition and higher costs for many of the services that our local municipalities contract out to private businesses.

We, the state's newspaper publishers, through a partnership with the Maine Press Association, publish every public notice in the state at mainenotices.com. This partnership ensures the widest audience for public notices. This bill will cripple the site, any notice this is not published in a newspaper will not be available on mainenotices.com.

Broadband access and accessibility of public notices are also of concern, especially in rural areas and for our low-income citizens. A printed newspaper continues to be the easiest and most affordable way for local governments to reach its citizens.

The ability to change and manipulate digital information is also worrisome. Things like back-dating a public notice or altering the details within the notice after publication can be done easily when the local government is also the publisher of the notices.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Crockett', written in a cursive style.

Chris Crockett, Publisher