



Testimony in Support of LD 2042:

“An Act to Eliminate the Requirement for Municipalities to Provide Public Notice in a Newspaper

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and the distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine.

Maine Policy Institute (MPI) respectfully submits testimony in support of LD 2042, which modernizes Maine’s public notice requirements by allowing municipalities to satisfy statutory notice obligations through publication on a publicly accessible municipal website, rather than mandating placement in a newspaper.

LD 2042 represents a modest but important reform. It does not eliminate public notice requirements, reduce the information provided to the public, or weaken transparency. Instead, it gives municipalities flexibility to meet existing notice obligations using modern, widely accessible, and significantly less costly means, and may potentially even improve transparency by allowing more accessible alternative methods of communication.

Reducing Unnecessary Costs

Mandatory newspaper publication requirements impose real and recurring costs on municipalities, particularly smaller towns with limited budgets. These costs ultimately fall on local taxpayers, even though the underlying policy goal—public notice—can be achieved through less expensive and more effective methods. By making newspaper publication optional rather than mandatory, LD 2042 reduces an unnecessary financial burden without sacrificing public accountability.

Preserving and Improving Transparency

Importantly, the bill does not allow municipalities to provide less information. Any notice posted online must contain all information currently required to be published in a newspaper. In practice, municipal websites often improve transparency by allowing residents to access notices at any time, search archives, and share information more easily than print classifieds permit.

Public access to information is not diminished when delivery methods change; in many cases, it is enhanced.



Promoting Neutral, Market-Oriented Policy

Statutory newspaper notice requirements function as a government-mandated transfer of municipal funds to a specific private industry. MPI has long opposed regulatory structures that require governments to purchase services from designated providers when equivalent or superior alternatives exist. LD 2042 removes that compulsion while leaving private newspapers free to compete on their merits.

Local Control and Flexibility

Finally, LD 2042 respects local decision-making. Municipalities that believe newspaper publication remains valuable for their communities may continue to use it. Others may choose modern alternatives better suited to their residents' needs. The bill expands choice rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate. This bill does not require online publishing, nor does it disallow municipalities from publishing public notices in newspapers. The bill simply provides municipalities with more choices on how they wish to issue public notices.

Conclusion

LD 2042 advances transparency, reduces costs, and modernizes government operations without weakening public notice requirements. For these reasons, the Maine Policy Institute urges the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2042. Thank you for your time and consideration.