

The Ellsworth American.

1 Printing House Square, Ellsworth, Maine
(207) 667-2576 • ellsworthamerican.com

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 2042 "An Act to Eliminate the Requirement for Municipalities to Provide Public Notice in a Newspaper"

Thank you, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and esteemed members of the State and Local Government Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 2042 which would remove the requirement that public notices be published in newspapers.

Public notices are a foundational element of transparent government. They exist so that ordinary residents and not just those who are digitally savvy, can stay informed about actions that affect their community, including property, taxes, schools, utilities, and local governance. Removing public notices from newspapers would significantly reduce their accessibility and weaken an important layer of public oversight.

First, newspapers remain one of the most accessible and equitable ways to reach the public. Printed newspapers are available at your local libraries, grocery stores, community centers, and senior facilities. They do not require broadband access, digital literacy, logins to multiple websites, or even electricity. Many residents, particularly seniors, low-income households, rural residents, and people with disabilities, continue to rely on print as their primary and most trustworthy source of information. Moving notices exclusively or primarily online risks excluding exactly the people public notices are meant to protect.

Maine newspapers already provide free, consolidated, statewide digital access to public notices through MaineNotices.com. Analytics show that MaineNotices.com was visited more than 70,000 times in 2025 alone, with two of the top referring sites being construction bidding clearinghouses. Publishing public notices in newspapers therefore saves local municipalities money by expanding the bidding audience for public projects well beyond traditional geographic boundaries. Eliminating newspaper public notices would render this centralized, newspaper-funded platform irrelevant and would likely result in reduced competition and higher costs for local construction projects.

Second, newspapers provide critical oversight that government-hosted notices do not. When notices are published independently, they are subject to established publication

standards, fixed deadlines, and public visibility. Newspapers act as a neutral third party, ensuring notices are published in full, on time, and in a form that cannot be quietly altered or removed. **This independence matters.** A notice buried on an obscure or hard-to-navigate municipality website does not provide the same transparency or accountability as a notice published in a widely circulated newspaper.

Newspapers also create a permanent, verifiable public record. Print notices are archived, indexed, and preserved in ways that are stable and discoverable over time. Websites change, links break, platforms are redesigned, and content can disappear without notice. For legal rights, land use decisions, and long-term public accountability, the reliability of the record is essential.

Finally, newspapers provide context. Notices appear alongside local reporting that help readers understand why a notice matters and how it fits into broader community issues. This strengthens civic engagement and public trust in government processes.

In short, removing public notices from newspapers does not modernize transparency, it diminishes their reach. True accessibility means meeting people where they are, not assuming everyone has equal access to digital tools or the inclination to regularly check multiple websites. Newspapers provide independent oversight that cannot be accomplished with the self-publication of public notices by local municipalities on a platform they control.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose LD 2042 and preserve the long-standing role of newspapers in ensuring open, accessible, and accountable government.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Crockett".

Christopher Crockett, Publisher
The Ellsworth American & Mount Desert Islander
Ellsworth, Maine