

Your Community, Your News, Your Hometown Paper

The Lincoln County News™

Locally Owned, Printed and Published in Lincoln County – Since 1875

January 13, 2026

Testimony on L.D. 2042 “An Act to Eliminate the Requirement for Municipalities to Provide Public Notice in a Newspaper”

Dear Chairs Baldacci and Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

Please accept this written testimony as it was not possible to attend this today's public hearing.

Public notices are essential for government transparency. They are the critical first step for those interested in knowing what is happening in their community.

I would encourage the committee members to vote ought not to pass on this legislation.

The responsibility to post public notices in an open and transparent way falls on local government officials. There should be a system of checks and balances to ensure notices are posted with adequate time and done correctly. This is currently accomplished through publishing in newspapers. This proposed bill would remove that requirement without offering an alternative.

Across much of the state, individual involvement in local government has been decreasing. With fewer people getting involved in local governments, the electorate has fewer choices. By removing the requirement that public notices run in newspapers, this trend will likely continue.

When we are interviewing candidates for reporter positions at our paper who are not familiar with how municipalities conduct business in Maine, we explain that the town meeting is one of the truest forms of democracy that exists. Many are surprised when we explain how the governing body, consisting of the townspeople, holds an open discussion and decides the fate of each article as an assembly. This does not exist in other parts of the country, and we should all take steps to protect this local form of government.

According to the UN's website, several items were declared essential elements of democracy including the holding of periodic free and fair elections by universal suffrage and by secret ballot as the expression of the will of the people; the separation of powers; transparency and accountability in public administration; and free, independent and pluralistic media.

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Public notices express when elections will be held and provide a level of transparency into the public administration. A free and independent media will ensure notices are made accurately and timely to help ensure separation of powers exist. L.D. 2042, as written, would erode some of these basic tenants of democracy and may lead to less trust in local government.

Through the Maine Press Association, our newspaper has been a steadfast proponent of ensuring public notices for the towns that we serve are placed on our website as well as mainenotices.com. This is in addition to printing them in a section of our weekly paper. This exposure is far greater than any of the municipal governments would garner through their own websites. In addition, anyone can view these notices for free at mainenotices.com, without the need to subscribe or purchase a newspaper.

We all lose when public notices become less accessible. Failing to publish these notices in newspapers will result in less attention, less oversight, and less involvement from the citizens.

Please note nothing in this testimony has addressed the impact to community newspapers at a time when approximately 39% of the newspapers in the United States have closed in the last 20 years.

I urge you to vote against this bill to support a more transparent process for local governments, and protect the current public notice law.

Sincerely,

John Roberts, Fifth Generation Publisher of The Lincoln County News