

# The Garden City Telegram

March 12, 2015

Rep. Mark Hutton, chairman  
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development  
Kansas House of Representatives

Rep. Hutton:

Please accept this correspondence as my plea to reject any move to allow governments to abandon the practice of placing public notice in newspapers.

Public notice has long been a vital part of open government. No government should be allowed to push through new ordinances, projects and other matters important to the people they serve without making public notice of those moves. On that point, I'm sure we agree.

Any disagreement would come from those who believe there's an easier, less expensive way to accomplish the same goal. For generations, governments have placed public notices in their local newspapers, still the most effective, efficient way to keep citizens in the loop.

However, some would argue that it's just as good to allow governments to post public notices on their own websites. They're wrong, and for a number of reasons:

- It's not in citizens' best interest to allow government officials to be in control of that information. Newspapers provide independence from government, which makes them a reliable source of information.

- Newspapers offer a permanent record that cannot be altered, hidden, manipulated, hacked or changed after the fact. Public notice, when published in a newspaper, is guaranteed by the publisher as fact. No such guarantee is possible with a government website.

- Newspaper publication provides a verifiable public record through sworn affidavits of publication that have been accepted for decades as adequate notice in a court of law.

- Numerous studies over the years have concluded that readers want their public notices in newspapers because that's where they are most likely to see them.

- Newspapers draw far more traffic to their websites than any government website, and can provide easy access to public notices already available in a digital format in electronic replicas of the actual printed pages.

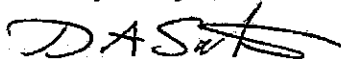
Also, please keep in mind that the expense of public notices represents a minuscule amount of a government's total spending budget. Yet taking the notices away from small newspapers could do irreparable harm to those businesses.

It's believed that Kansas would lose many small, community newspapers if their public notice income went away. Kansas cannot afford to lose any businesses or jobs.

We all would agree that governments should spend taxpayer dollars with care. But the cost in hindering access to important public notices by far outweighs any gain to government in budget savings.

Please keep citizens' right to information on their governments as accessible as possible by not tampering with a sensible policy that requires public notice in newspapers — an effective system that best serves the public's right to know.

Thank you for your consideration.



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The Garden City Telegram