

Dear GEAA members and friends,

Thanks to Alliance for a Clean Texas for bringing [HB 335](#) filed by [Representative Jonathan Strickland](#) of Tarrant County. This bill would allow a political subdivision to “satisfy a requirement in any other law to provide notice by publication in a newspaper by posting the notice on its Internet website...”

I can't tell you how often GEAA member groups have been alerted to various projects requiring their attention by reading a notice in their local paper. Eliminating requirements to publish notices is not the way to go. If anything, requirements should be made to encourage more transparency; for example, requiring notices be published in the newspapers having the largest circulation in each county.

We will keep you posted on the movement of this bill. Luckily, we are not alone in opposing HB 335.

KEEP TEXAS NOTIFIED



PROTECTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY & OVERSIGHT

Transparency and open government are the cornerstones of our democracy. There is an ongoing effort to take public notice out of newspapers and give control over the notice publication to local governments. These changes to the public notice laws will result in reduced transparency, less open government protection and less oversight of government spending.

OVERSIGHT:

- Public Notice is not simply about getting information to vendors – it creates an informed public concerning government expenditures and taxation, environmental issues and public meetings.
- Public Notice enables citizens to keep watch on their government and tax dollars. A lack of access to information about government spending can lead to corruption.
- Public Notice helps raise awareness about governmental and corporate projects and activities that impact the environment, the air we breath, our water supply, and the kind of world we leave to future generations.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT:

- Removing procurement-related Public Notice from newspapers will disenfranchise minorities, the disabled, the elderly and those in rural communities, and will make it harder to reach HUB goals for large contracts.
- Minorities, the elderly, and disabled Texans – all of whom have statistically lower Internet access – have a right to information about their government.

EASE OF ACCESS/ARCHIVABILITY

- Large counties have dozens, even hundreds of taxing entities. It would be a burden to force citizens to monitor countless entity websites, as opposed to turning to a single source - their local newspaper.
- Government websites impose a variety of obstacles to accessing public notices, including registration requirements, forcing the public to download one notice at a time, software incompatibility issues, and disclaimers for the content they provide.
- None of the proposals to move Public Notice to government websites have included details about standards for placement, archive requirements or a plan to provide independent verification.
- Newspapers maintain extensive archives with the ability to reproduce notices after publication, as well as an affidavit of publication. The proposed changes to current law do not require a similar commitment to access published notices after the fact – a critical protection for local governments to be able to demonstrate compliance with the law.

AFFORDABILITY:

- Newspapers are required to charge the lowest classified rate, post the notice on their websites for no extra charge as well as on a central industry website. Public Notices in newspapers are an affordable and efficient method to keep the public notified, are a tiny fraction of local governments' budgets, and are a small price to pay to provide transparency.
- Nothing in current law prevents governments from posting notices on their websites now. For many rural communities, the cost would be greater to put the information on the web (due to costs associated with archiving, ensuring compliance with legal guidelines, and publication verifications).

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Have a great weekend!

Annalisa Peace
Executive Director

You can always keep up with interesting water news on [GEAA's Face Book page](#) and, you can mail contributions to support GEAA's Legislative advocacy to PO Box 15618, San Antonio, Texas 78212