

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS URGE STATE LEADERS TO TAKE ACTION ON LOOMING PUBLIC NOTICE CRISIS

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Contact: New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM)
New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)
New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC)

Time is of the essence for state leaders to address New Jersey's looming public notice crisis exacerbated by NJ Advance Media's recent announcement that it's terminating daily print publications in January of 2025. With this in mind, the above noted organizations are urging state leaders to enact legislation that will provide local governments with the following options to publish public notices:

1. In a clear and transparent manner on a local government's official website; or,
2. In a database created and maintained by the State of New Jersey; or,
3. On a website or digital publication maintained by the traditional press or an online news publication.

Our non-partisan coalition, which represents school districts, municipalities, and county governments from across the state submits that these recommendations will allow local governments to comply with the notice requirements under the law in a timely, cost effective, and efficient manner. Moreover, these recommendations will streamline an antiquated process and replace it with a more contemporary and flexible method for publishing legal notices that may also save valuable taxpayer dollars.

In general, current law requires local purchasing officials, school boards, clerks of the board, planning departments, improvement authorities, and other local government officials to publish onerous written information and legal notices in various newspaper publications. Such notices typically include contract awards, contract addendums, meeting notices, RFP and RFQ notices, election notices, and much more. Public officials have long decried that publishing these voluminous documents in newspapers is costly, time consuming, and outdated. Importantly note that long before NJ Advanced Media's announcement, local officials found it difficult to comply with the notice requirements under the law as the newspaper industry has grown increasingly digitized and struggled to retain staff, resources, and publications.

For the reasons set forth above, we're again urging State leaders to act swiftly in enacting these recommendations as they will also allow local governments to comply with the law before annual reorganization meetings in January of 2025 when counties, municipalities, school districts, and more must designate an official newspaper for publishing public notices. *Please do not hesitate to contact Mike Cerra with NJLM at 609-695-3481, Jonathan Pushman with NJSBA at 609-278-5284, or John Donnadio with NJAC at 609-394-3467 with any questions or concerns.*