

Testimony of Teri Henning, Pennsylvania Newspaper Association  
HB633, House Local Government Committee  
May 19, 2011

Good Morning. My name is Teri Henning, and I am the President of the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association. Chairman Creighton, Chairman Freeman and other members of the House Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing us to speak this morning on House Bill 633.

The newspaper association and its members oppose HB633 for a number of reasons, including that it will result in significant costs to government, taxpayers, and citizens. These costs include the financial burden of upgrading, maintaining and staffing websites across the Commonwealth, in addition to the costs associated with less transparency in government. These could include less competitive bidding, public anger when controversial measures are passed without adequate public notice, the lack of Internet access by many Pennsylvanians, the difficulty of finding notices that could be spread across thousands of websites and more.

Sitting with me today are Martin Till, President of PennJersey Advance and Publisher of The Express-Times (Easton), Jack Williams, a Johnstown City Council Member, Ernie Schreiber, Editor of The Lancaster New Era and LancasterOnline.com, Don Bower, a Berwick business owner, and Bernie Oravec, publisher of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette. In the audience, there are numerous, additional representatives from Pennsylvania newspapers, including personnel from The Patriot-News (Harrisburg), El Hispano (Philadelphia), The Philadelphia Tribune, the Herald-Standard (Uniontown), the Observer-Reporter (Washington), The Indiana Gazette, the Pocono Record, the Bucks County Courier Times, The Intelligencer (Doylestown), The Times Herald (Norristown), the Pottsville Republican, the Delaware County Daily & Sunday Times, The Mercury (Pottstown), Lancaster Newspapers, The Express-Times (Easton), and many more.

Newspapers in Pennsylvania remain strong, vital parts of their communities. Of the 1400 daily newspapers in the country, 79 are in Pennsylvania. More significantly, of the 200+ family-owned newspapers remaining in the country, 50 are in Pennsylvania. The families that own Lancaster Newspapers (purchased by Steinman in 1866), Calkins Media (purchased by Calkins in 1937), Observer-Reporter Publishing Company (purchased by Stewart in 1902), and many more, have had roots in their communities for generations, contributing significantly to the local economy, the dissemination of news, the public discourse, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. They are a significant source of news and information in their communities. They are also employers, taxpayers, and citizens.

Readership remains strong among Pennsylvania papers. Recent (Scarborough, 2010) research shows that approximately 83% of Pennsylvania adults have read a newspaper in the last week. Chances are, if you're reading a news item on a website, it originated at a newspaper.

In contrast, significant percentages of Pennsylvanians are not on the Internet, including more than half of our senior citizens. These bills would allow local governments to put public notices on their individual websites, which could mean that notices are spread across more than 4,000 websites.

Newspapers have long held an important role in the public notice process. They provide government agencies, business owners and taxpayers an easy, inexpensive, legally verifiable way to publish and receive notice of government plans and activities. Pennsylvania newspapers have already created - and continue to support - a statewide, searchable database for public notices at [www.mypublicnotices.com](http://www.mypublicnotices.com).

Before I introduce our first speaker, I want to emphasize that this is not just a newspaper issue. It is a public issue. Organizations including the League of Women Voters, the AARP, the Kitchen Table Patriots, PennFuture, the Teamsters, and the Sierra Club have joined the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association in opposing this bill.

Thank you for your time this morning, and the panel is happy to take any questions that you may have.