



# First Amendment FOUNDATION

Protecting Your Right to Know Since 1985

February 10, 2020

The Honorable Randy Fine  
Florida House of Representatives  
222 The Capitol  
402 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: HB 7 – Publication of Legal Notices

Dear Representative Fine:

I am writing to express the First Amendment Foundation's opposition to House Bill 7, which provides for website publication of legal notices.

It is difficult to imagine that citizens will find important legal notices on agency websites so that they are able to inform themselves of important governmental decisions or meetings. How will they know what particular agency website to search, or when they should search that agency's website for a particular type of legal notice?

Most often, citizens learn about legal notices and notices of public meetings by reading about them in newspapers, whether those newspapers are published online or in print. While the way we receive news may be changing, the vast majority of Floridians still read newspapers everyday – some on online and still many via old-fashioned home delivery. It is a broad American practice to read newspapers over breakfast each morning – many now on their iPads or laptops, but still newspapers. That is the way citizens are accustomed to receiving notice of governmental change and open government meetings.

Because of the internet, public consumption of news via trusted media outlets is on the rise. And for many Floridians, the first trusted news source they turn to is their local newspaper.

Newspapers of local consumption is where governmental legal notices are expected to be, and **must** remain. That is where they are most accessible. And, bottom line: Legal notice to the public is integral to participatory democracy.

To justify this bill, supporters have suggested that this legislation will save local governments millions of dollars. Staff analysis, however, concludes that whether this bill will truly save money is "indeterminate." Saving governmental funds is certainly a worthy goal. However, limiting legal public notices by removing them to

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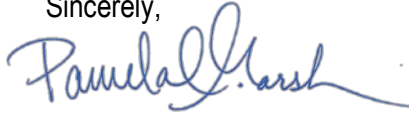
### DAVE WILSON

Senior Editor, *The Miami Herald*

an obscure municipal agency's website is not a desirable way to save money in a country that prides itself on participatory democracy.

We are grateful for your time, work and consideration. If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to call me at the number below.

Sincerely,



Pamela C. Marsh, President

Cc: The Honorable Jose Oliva, President, The Florida House  
Mr. Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Chair, First Amendment Foundation  
Mr. Samuel Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association  
Ms. Lisa Nellesen Savage, Chair, Florida Society of News Editors

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