



January 26, 2021

The Honorable Ray Wesley Rodrigues
305 Senate Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: SB 402 Public Notice and Voting Rights Restoration Database

Dear Senator Rodrigues:

The First Amendment Foundation writes in opposition to Senate Bill 402, which will reduce the number of Floridians who see judicial notices by removing legal notifications from newspapers to a website established by the Supreme Court.

Moving notices exclusively to the internet will particularly affect Floridians with limited broadband access, many living in rural communities. In some rural counties, more than 50 percent of residents [lack adequate access](#). Due to income inequalities, many people living in urban areas lack reliable internet access and smartphones. This bill will leave poor and rural Floridians without adequate access to legal notifications and notifications by county clerks.

Newspapers, through print and the web, reach a greater audience than government websites. In fact, the newspaper audience in Florida is 10 times larger than most city or county websites. Currently, readers see notices while looking for other information in the paper or online. Under Senate Bill 402, only those who seek out a new government website will be aware of legal notices.

Moreover, publication in newspapers allows for third-party verification of notice. At present, newspapers must verify that government notices were published on time. Senate Bill 402 is silent regarding verification, making it harder to ensure government entities have met notice deadlines, included critical information, and did not hide notice.

This bill limits who sees legal notices – adversely affecting poor and rural Floridians -- and removes verification from an

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JIM BALTZELLE, CHAIRMAN

Director Local Media Southeast,
The Associated Press

AMY HOLLYFIELD, VICE CHAIR

Senior Deputy Editor, *Tampa Bay Times*

FRANK DENTON, TREASURER

Retired Editor, *Florida Times-Union*

FARHOOD BASIRI

Co-Founder, *Bellwether Software Development*

DICK BATCHELOR

Founder and President,
Dick Batchelor Management Group, Inc.

MIKE DEESON

President, *Deeson Media*

JIM FOGLER

President and CEO, *Florida Press Association/Intersect Media*

TRIMMEL GOMES

President, *Gomes Media Strategies*

THOMAS D. HALL

President, *TLH Consulting Group LLC*

CAROL JEAN LOCICERO

Attorney, *Thomas & LoCicero*

MIRA LOWE

Assistant Dean for Student Experience, *UF College of Journalism & Communications*

Director, *The Innovation News Center*

CINDY McCURRY-ROSS

Executive Editor & VP of Content, *The News-Press*

CAROL MARBIN MILLER

Deputy Investigations Editor, *Miami Herald*

SAMUEL J. MORLEY

General Counsel, *Florida Press Association*

CAITIE MUÑOZ

Reporter, *WLRN Public Media*

PATRICK RICE

Editor, *Daytona Beach News-Journal*

BOB SHAW

Retired Editor, *Orlando Sentinel*

PETE WEITZEL

Director Emeritus

WENDY WALKER

President Emeritus, *Leadership Florida*

CHARLEY WILLIAMS

Past State Board, *League of Women Voters of Florida*

Director, *Business Development, GEC*

DAVE WILSON

Senior Editor, *The Miami Herald*

independent party to a government entity or contractor. Accordingly, FAF opposes Senate Bill 402.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pamela C. Marsh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Pamela C. Marsh, President

Cc: The Honorable Wilton Simpson, President, Senate President
Mr. Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Chair, First Amendment Foundation
Mr. Samuel Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association
Ms. Lisa Nellessen Savage, Chair, Florida Society of News Editors

