

April 7, 2021



Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
201 The Capitol
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: SB 402 Legal Notices

The First Amendment Foundation writes to express its concerns with Senate Bill 402, which will reduce public participation in government decision-making. SB 402 permits legal notices to be published on a website of *any* newspaper of general circulation in Florida. There is no geographic requirement. As a result, a county commission in northwest Florida could notice an ordinance or meeting on an internet publication of a newspaper covering the southeast portion of the state. There is nothing in the bill to prevent local governments from hiding notices of unpopular decisions on newspaper websites in other parts of the state.

The individuals affected by decisions of a code enforcement board, special district, or commission may be unaware of forthcoming votes and meetings and unable to voice their concerns or support to government entities. SB 402 reduces public participation and oversight of government decision making. Accordingly, FAF opposes SB 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".

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 Editor

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