



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Newspaper legal notices bill signed into law

MADISON, Wis. – Legislation authored by Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) and Sen. Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) that relates to newspaper legal notices has been signed into state law.

Under current state statutes, most local units of government must publish the agendas and minutes of their meetings in a newspaper. Newspapers must meet certain requirements in order to be considered eligible to receive compensation for printing those legal notices.

Wisconsin Act 32 intends to make government operations more transparent by giving additional community newspapers the opportunity to bring in more revenue through the publishing of legal notices.

The internet has created numerous challenges for the newspaper industry and many papers have gone out of business. Many people are unwilling to pay for a newspaper subscription when they can get their news for free online. Act 32 recognizes that new business models are emerging to compete in the modern marketplace.

“With this new law, local governments will have the ability to choose the newspaper that will best reach the largest amount of residents,” Rep. Kitchens said. “We strongly believe a more transparent government is a better government. Plus, by having more newspapers become eligible to be compensated for publishing legal notices, we expect to increase competition, which should help lower costs to taxpayers.”

“Act 32 helps to bring government transparency into the modern era by adapting qualification requirements to the shifting print media market,” Sen. Cowles added. “By creating more avenues to get local legal notices in front of more Wisconsinites, we can improve local government, hometown journalism and civic engagement throughout the state. I was pleased to work with Representative Kitchens on this important effort.”

Moreover, Act 32 takes advantage of modern technology by requiring all newspapers to also publish their legal notices on their websites. The legal notices section must be available to the public at no cost.

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