

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

STATE CAPITOL  
HARRISBURG, PA

IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 523

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021  
9:30 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON HOUSE BILL 955

BEFORE:

HONORABLE JERRY KNOWLES, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE BOB BROOKS  
HONORABLE JOE HAMM  
HONORABLE RICH IRVIN  
HONORABLE R. LEE JAMES  
HONORABLE DAVID MALONEY  
HONORABLE BRETT MILLER  
HONORABLE JIM RIGBY  
HONORABLE PERRY STAMBAUGH  
HONORABLE PARKE WENTLING  
HONORABLE ROBERT FREEMAN, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE LIZ HANBIDGE  
HONORABLE CAROL HILL-EVANS  
HONORABLE STEVEN MALAGARI  
HONORABLE KYLE MULLINS  
HONORABLE BENJAMIN SANCHEZ  
HONORABLE CHRISTINA SAPPEY  
HONORABLE PERRY WARREN  
HONORABLE REGINA YOUNG

1 COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

2 ROBERT GAERTNER  
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

3 KYLE SCHAEFFER  
MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST

4 LAUREN E. MILLER  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT II

5 LAUREN A. MILLER  
DISTRICT OFFICE MANAGER

6  
7 JON CASTELLI  
DEMOCRATIC SENIOR COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

8 BRIANNA MEDEVICH  
RESEARCH ANALYST II

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*Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

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SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

\* \* \* \* \*

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

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MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Good morning, everyone. At this time, we'll call the meeting of the Local Government Committee to order.

And I would ask for everyone to please stand for the pledge of our flag.

(Pledge of Allegiance recited.)

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you, everyone.

Just a little bit of house cleaning -- we would ask that all of you turn off your electronic devices or put them on vibrate. Also, I want you to be aware that the meeting is being livestreamed and that the members who are participating through the Teams process should be aware that because of House rules that the chat function is not working. You will be able to participate verbally, but the chat function is not working.

So at this time, I would ask Lauren Miller to please take the roll.

MS. L. E. MILLER: Knowles?

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Here.

MS. L. E. MILLER: Brooks?

(Inaudible.)

MS. L. E. MILLER: Emrick? Leave.

1 Hamm?

2 (Inaudible.)

3 MS. L. E. MILLER: Irvin?

4 (Inaudible.)

5 MS. L. E. MILLER: Maloney?

6 (Inaudible.)

7 MS. L. E. MILLER: I'm sorry. James? Leave.

8 Maloney? Leave.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: No. He's online.

10 MS. L. E. MILLER: Oh, he's online? Okay.

11 Miller?

12 (Inaudible.)

13 MS. L. E. MILLER: Mizgorski?

14 (Inaudible.)

15 MS. L. E. MILLER: Rader? Leave.

16 MS. L. E. MILLER: Rigby?

17 (Inaudible.)

18 MS. L. E. MILLER: Rowe? Leave.

19 Stambaugh?

20 (Inaudible.)

21 MS. L. E. MILLER: Wentling?

22 (Inaudible.)

23 MS. L. E. MILLER: Wheeland? Leave.

24 Freeman?

25 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Here.

1 MS. L. E. MILLER: Hanbidge?

2 (Inaudible.)

3 MS. L. E. MILLER: Hill-Evans?

4 (Inaudible.)

5 MS. L. E. MILLER: Kim? Leave.

6 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: On leave.

7 MS. L. E. MILLER: Malagari?

8 REPRESENTATIVE MALAGARI: Present virtually.

9 MS. L. E. MILLER: Mullins?

10 (Inaudible.)

11 MS. L. E. MILLER: Sanchez?

12 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: He is virtual, as  
13 well, I believe.

14 MS. L. E. MILLER: Sappey?

15 (Inaudible.)

16 MS. L. E. MILLER: Warren?

17 REPRESENTATIVE WARREN: Here virtually.

18 MS. L. E. MILLER: And Young?

19 REPRESENTATIVE YOUNG: Here virtually.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
21 much, Lauren. We have a quorum.

22 What I would do is -- we're going to  
23 recognize the fact that we are limited in terms of time. We  
24 believe that House Bill 955 is a very important piece of  
25 legislation. There were members who came to me that wanted

1 to learn more about it. So that's the reason that we're  
2 having the hearing.

3 And Chairman Freeman agreed with me that this  
4 would be a good idea, and I thank him for his cooperation.

5 We're going to limit the testimony as we go  
6 along. I'll indicate there will be five minutes for each  
7 panel. And there has been a designated person from each of  
8 those panels to testify and then the others will be  
9 available to ask questions.

10 So, Chairman Freeman, I'll turn it over to  
11 you.

12 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Chairman.

14 I know we're on a tight schedule; so in the  
15 interest of time, I'll waive my remarks.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: That's very kind  
17 of you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Okay, our first gentleman -- Representative  
19 Ortitay is the prime sponsor of House Bill 955.

20 And, Representative, if you would, fill us in  
21 on the details of the legislation.

22 REPRESENTATIVE ORTITAY: Thank you, Mr.  
23 Chairman, and thank you, members of the committee. Thank  
24 you for holding a hearing on this bill. I promise I won't  
25 be long-winded or belabor this. I'll just give a brief

1 summary of the bill and what it does, and then I'll  
2 conclude. And I think we're going to take maybe a couple of  
3 questions after that, according to the Chairman, if that's  
4 okay.

5           House Bill 955 would provide a flexible menu  
6 of options for local governments to use in complying with  
7 current requirements to advertise and provide public notice  
8 in physically printed newspapers. This legislation will  
9 modernize our advertising requirements. There's been a  
10 trend in recent years; printed newspapers have been reducing  
11 or eliminating regular publishing and increasing advertising  
12 costs. And local governments are finding it difficult to  
13 comply with the advertising requirements in current law.

14           County, municipality, and school district  
15 officials fully support the need to keep their communities  
16 informed of local government events and operations, and they  
17 know that the public engagement and transparency are  
18 necessary. The challenge for local officials is to use the  
19 forms of communication most likely to reach constituents in  
20 a timely manner.

21           Current law mandates local governments to  
22 publish notice of various board and committee meetings,  
23 bidding requirements for certain purchases and contracts,  
24 legal notices, and official advertisements only in print  
25 newspapers of general circulation. This was created before



1 the internet changed the ways that people consume  
2 information. This is why I introduced this bill, to provide  
3 flexibility in meeting these government mandates in a way  
4 that will improve efficiency and increase readership.

5           The proposal allows counties, municipalities,  
6 and school districts to advertise public notices either  
7 electronically or in a printed format by choosing from a  
8 menu of seven options. But before I get into the seven  
9 different options laid out in the bill, I want to emphasize  
10 that this bill would require a local government or school  
11 district that chooses one of these seven options outside of  
12 the current government mandated newspaper circulation, that  
13 they post a copy of the notice or advertisement at their  
14 main office of the local government; number two, that they  
15 advertise a resolution by adopted -- or adopted by the  
16 governing body in a newspaper of general circulation  
17 informing people which option they are choosing; and number  
18 three, they keep a copy of every single advertisement or  
19 notice for at least three years.

20           So I'll lay out the seven options and then  
21 I'm going to wrap up.

22           Option number one, newspaper of general  
23 circulation, which is currently being used; number two,  
24 newspaper printed in local government union or unit; a  
25 newspaper circulating generally in the local government

1 unit; a legal newspaper designated by the rules of the court  
2 of the county in which the local government is located for  
3 publication of legal notices and advertisements; local  
4 government's publicly accessible website; the website of a  
5 newspaper qualified under the first four options; and last  
6 but not least, a locally circulated, printed publication, at  
7 least four pages long, that is issued on a weekly basis and  
8 distributed to all addresses and local government.

9           Now, and that last one, I know, can be a  
10 little bit confusing. Some of us have magazines that go out  
11 sometimes on a weekly or a monthly basis. Some of them are  
12 done on a school district level. I know that I get them in  
13 my district from my local school district, as well, but  
14 something along those lines, like a magazine; they usually  
15 have a lot of advertisements in them, and they also talk  
16 about local events.

17           And just to wrap up, this legislation is  
18 supported by the School Boards Association, the County  
19 Commissioners Association, the Municipal Authorities  
20 Association, the Municipal League, the Association of  
21 Boroughs, Township Supervisors, and Township Commissioners.

22           So in closing, this bill seeks to provide  
23 flexibility for our local governments to reach more of their  
24 constituents in a manner that is catered to their specific  
25 area and needs, especially in a time where innovative

1 technology is hopefully about to solve the rural broadband  
2 problem that we have across the state. Times and technology  
3 are changing, newspaper circulation is trending downward,  
4 and I believe it makes sense to update the law to reflect  
5 the times we live in to be proactive before it becomes  
6 impossible for our local governments to comply with the law.

7 So, members of the committee, Mr. Chairman,  
8 thank you very much.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
10 Representative. We appreciate your testimony.

11 Although the -- we're going to dedicate as  
12 much of the time as we can to the folks who traveled here to  
13 testify, Chairman Freeman had requested that -- and I did  
14 notify you that you could -- if you have a question of  
15 Representative Ortitay, something that you believe is  
16 time-sensitive or that he didn't cover under the testimony,  
17 we would call on you to ask your question now.

18 (No response.)

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Is there anyone  
20 online that may have a question of the Representative?

21 (No response.)

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay,  
23 Representative, you are welcome to join us here in the -- up  
24 here at the front or whenever you choose to. If you can  
25 hang around, you're welcome to do so.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE ORTITAY: Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chairman. I have one other committee I need to go to, and  
3 then I'm going to try to come back, if that's okay with you.

4                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Absolutely.  
5 Thank you, Representative.

6                   REPRESENTATIVE ORTITAY: Thank you very much.

7                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you.

8                   We'll call up our first panel. And our first  
9 panel will consist of Daryl Miller. He is a Bradford County  
10 commissioner and a good friend of Representative Tina  
11 Pickett, who I served with for many years as a county  
12 commissioner.

13                   So, Daryl, you're going to do the five  
14 minutes of testimony.

15                   We're also asking Joseph Gerdes III -- he's  
16 the Director of Government Relations for the Pennsylvania  
17 Association of Township Supervisors; Amy Sturges from the  
18 Pennsylvania Municipal League, as well as the Pennsylvania  
19 State Association on Township Commissioners; and last, but  
20 certainly not least, Ed Troxell, Director of Government  
21 Affairs for the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs.

22                   So, Commissioner Miller, you may begin when  
23 you are ready.

24                   (Inaudible.)

25                   MR. MILLER: Okay, I'm on now. Okay.

1           Again, thank you, Chairman.

2           Thank you, committee members.

3           Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
4 before the Local Government Committee today. I am Daryl  
5 Miller, Chairman of the Bradford County Board of  
6 Commissioners and have been serving my county for nine and a  
7 half years. I'm pleased to present on behalf of the County  
8 Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania -- which I serve  
9 as first vice president -- today and share our support for  
10 increasing legal advertising options for counties.

11           The County Commissioners Association of  
12 Pennsylvania is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association  
13 representing the Commonwealth's 67 counties; and I  
14 appreciate the opportunity to offer remarks today in support  
15 of House Bill 955. This legislation would provide a menu of  
16 options for local governments to modernize advertising  
17 requirements and provide savings to local governments while  
18 increasing options for notice availability for our  
19 communities.

20           Our association has, for many years,  
21 advocated for legislation that would allow local governments  
22 the ability to electronically publish legal notices in lieu  
23 of newspaper advertisements as a sole option. Giving local  
24 government more options and flexibility can lead to better  
25 outcomes for notification time lines, transparency in our

1 communities, can have a broader reach, and will save  
2 taxpayer money. Not only can electronic advertising already  
3 reach a wider audience -- and over the coming years will  
4 continue to do so -- but the availability of newspapers  
5 publishing for print circulation regularly is dwindling,  
6 making timely and widespread advertising increasingly  
7 challenging.

8           By way of data, a 2016 State of the News  
9 Media report by the Pew Research Center showed that print  
10 circulation declined by 9 percent from 2010 to 2015, while  
11 digital circulation increased by 2 percent. Providing  
12 options to counties allows us to make the best choices  
13 within our communities, thereby serving our interest in the  
14 broadest possible dissemination of our meeting, legal, and  
15 contracting notices.

16           The Pew Research Center also found that as of  
17 early 2016, just two in ten adults often get news from print  
18 newspapers, falling from 27 percent in 2013. At the same  
19 time, 38 percent often get news online. And most of those  
20 who prefer to read their news now opt to get it online  
21 instead of in print -- 59 percent, compared with 26 percent  
22 of readers who opt for print.

23           Electronic advertising can also get the word  
24 out more quickly. Many counties are no longer served by  
25 daily markets. And even at the Capitol, it can take as long

1 as four days from sending notice to print media to its  
2 publication. Electronic can be as quick as formatting the  
3 page on a website. Furthermore, electronic advertising  
4 offers features not available in the print media. Some  
5 counties have available subscription to automatic e-mail or  
6 RSS notices when a notice page is updated. Most county  
7 sites are searchable, and pages can be tagged to facilitate  
8 their detection by search engines so that individuals and  
9 corporations within and even outside our jurisdiction can  
10 discover notices on topics, meetings, or contracts of  
11 particular interest.

12           Even more, the last year has shown us all how  
13 important online advertising operations are to the continued  
14 ability of local governments to continue to offer  
15 transparency and accountability to their constituents. Far  
16 from reducing public outreach access, moving public meetings  
17 online, for instance, often increased the ability of  
18 individuals to participate.

19           Bradford County -- and I should say, Bradford  
20 County is a very rural county -- has over 4,000 Facebook  
21 followers. When we started our meetings online through this  
22 COVID thing -- when we did them in person, we'd have two or  
23 three people show up; now we've got hundreds at every  
24 meeting.

25           In fact, many counties anticipate keeping

1 some form of online access available even after the COVID-19  
2 pandemic. We also saw an increase in the number of  
3 residents going online to access services, file documents,  
4 pay fees, and so on. All items that have now become a  
5 regular matter of course in our everyday lives.

6 To that end, counties are already using  
7 electronic communication such as websites, e-mail, and  
8 social media to reach their residents because they have  
9 found it to be an effective way to provide information and  
10 be transparent about county government. And after last  
11 year, with so many of Pennsylvanians working and being  
12 educated from home for at least some period of time and many  
13 government operations going digital, including the general  
14 assembly, we would anticipate both the data in consumption  
15 of online news media and government communication with  
16 constituents to have risen sharply.

17 In addition to increasing transparency and  
18 outreach to our residents, the cost savings associated with  
19 electronic options for advertising helps us to be better  
20 stewards of our limited taxpayer dollars. County costs for  
21 the placement of legal ads continues to increase at a time  
22 when all levels of government are looking for the most  
23 effective ways to use limited resources.

24 Bradford County currently spends about  
25 \$40,000 a year on advertisements. Continuing to mandate



1 legal notice publication in general circulation newspapers  
2 fails to recognize how technology has changed the way in  
3 which people receive their news and how counties have  
4 adopted and benefited from the use of technology. It also  
5 requires local governments to pay the associated costs of  
6 print advertisements even if comparable or increased  
7 notification could be provided at a lower cost. It has been  
8 noted that Pennsylvania's newspapers already fund a  
9 searchable, updated public notice at no public expense.  
10 However, the only way for a notice to appear on this  
11 database is if local government takes on the public expense  
12 of paying the advertising rates for print advertisement in  
13 the first place.

14                   For these reasons, CCAP and the counties  
15 across the Commonwealth believe that House Bill 955 provides  
16 an appropriate and customizable approach to meeting local  
17 notice requirements in a way that also works for  
18 Pennsylvanians in 2021 and beyond. Counties should have the  
19 option to advertise in the way they feel is most responsible  
20 for their community's preferences and needs. Furthermore,  
21 there is nothing in House Bill 955 that prohibits  
22 publication of advertisements in general circulation  
23 newspapers nor requires exclusively online advertising; and  
24 this is the kind of flexibilities counties need to best  
25 serve their residents. Not only will this lower public

1 costs and still achieve the intended government transparency  
2 purposes, but it, in fact, will likely make the information  
3 more readily accessible at the punch of a button 24 hours a  
4 day, 7 days a week.

5           Again, I thank you for the opportunity to  
6 testify, and if there are any questions, I believe.

7           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
8 much, Commissioner Miller.

9           And for the record, we have County  
10 Commissioner Daryl Miller, as well as Joseph Gerdes, and Ed  
11 Troxell are here physically in the room, and Amy Sturges is  
12 participating remotely.

13           So I thank you-all for participating today.

14           So at this point, we will open up for  
15 questions. Anyone have any questions?

16           Chairman.

17           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you, Mr.  
18 Chairman.

19           And thank you for your testimony today.

20           Just a real quick one. You had mentioned one  
21 of the benefits, in your opinion, of the legislation is that  
22 it affords flexibility. You can still advertise in the  
23 newspaper, you can go online, you can use these other -- the  
24 full menu of options.

25           Is there not a concern to some extent that in

1 providing so much choice we might end up confusing the  
2 general public as to where they find these items? And I  
3 relate that to what we've seen in our society in recent  
4 years where we have this explosion of choice for news and  
5 everything else. And it's sometimes tough to track down, to  
6 identify, "Where did I get this? Where is this from?"

7           In some respects, it can be overwhelming.  
8 And if you have, say, 30 or 40 different municipalities  
9 within a county using different formats, does that not pose  
10 some measure of confusion for the general public and also  
11 for those who wish to bid on contracts or comply with other  
12 RFPs, that sort of thing? Not knowing whether they should  
13 go to the paper or the municipality's on-site, online,  
14 on-site, or some other menu that's allowed for in the  
15 legislation?

16           MR. MILLER: Well, as far as the choice, the  
17 availability of choice, to me -- just the nature of the way  
18 we do business today, giving municipalities and counties the  
19 options to make whatever choice is best, suits their needs  
20 locally.

21           And we're kind of blessed in Bradford County,  
22 in that we have four local papers. Two of them publish a  
23 weekly publication, and two of them publish six days a week.  
24 But that's not the case in all counties across the  
25 Commonwealth. The print publication availability in a lot

1 of counties has been greatly reduced over the last number of  
2 years. So to us, it's a matter of just providing the  
3 flexibility depending on the circumstances in each  
4 particular county or municipality.

5 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Although those  
6 print publications probably are online in most cases, too, I  
7 would assume.

8 (No response.)

9 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
12 Chairman.

13 Mr. Troxell, you want to add something?

14 MR. TROXELL: This is on? Okay. Great.  
15 Thanks so much.

16 Hey, I want to follow up on your question,  
17 Chairman Freeman, because one of the most vital aspects  
18 about this bill -- where this issue we've been working since  
19 2001. I mean, I've been around since then, as we've seen  
20 all types of ways to get this information out to people.

21 But we provide this flexibility here. I  
22 think one of the important aspects is there has to be a  
23 resolution that's advertised the formal way. And once that  
24 kind of, like, sets the methodology for the community and to  
25 those that are desiring to get this information, once they

1 can acquire that, if they need to see it in the newspaper,  
2 that's still being printed. A lot of times what my folks  
3 will do, too, is they will also post that on their website.  
4 So I think we're looking -- you know what I mean?

5 I can agree with you about, "Where do I go to  
6 find that information?" It's, like, you know, water, water  
7 everywhere, nothing to drink. So it's kind of, like, when  
8 we do that formal resolution that will indicate, "We're  
9 going to use this as an option," that kind of brings the  
10 old-school way of doing things, moving it into the  
11 modernized, you know, methods where we acquire that  
12 information, if that's any help.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
14 much.

15 A follow-up from the Chairman.

16 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you for  
17 raising that point. You do raise a very significant point  
18 as far as that transition, by providing notification.

19 I guess the concern on possibly an  
20 overwhelming choice is that I wonder how many people, the  
21 public, will catch that resolution when it's published or  
22 will know that in Township A it's done this way, in Borough  
23 B it's done this way, and Third-Class City C it's done this  
24 way, and still not get a good grasp of where they go for the  
25 information. But your point is well taken.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. TROXELL: And that dynamic existed,  
3 unfortunately, even back in the 1940s. You know what I  
4 mean?

5 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: True, true.

6 MR. TROXELL: It's always, "Where do I find  
7 this?"

8 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: That's true.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. TROXELL: Thanks.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
12 much.

13 And thank you, Chairman.

14 Is there anyone else -- if anyone else on the  
15 committee, either remotely or in person, has a question of  
16 the panel, kindly raise your hand so that we will know that.

17 I do have a question, and I'm not sure which  
18 of you...

19 Representative Rigby, go ahead.

20 REPRESENTATIVE RIGBY: Is there any concern  
21 from getting away from print areas -- I have some areas in  
22 my district that don't have rural broadband. They don't  
23 have internet access. Is that a concern with the  
24 advertisers, if you're going to go that route?

25 I met with my local publisher, and that

1    seemed to be a big concern with them. We want to make sure  
2    that everybody has the opportunity to see those notices and  
3    that they know what is -- what's going on within their  
4    municipality, district, city, or county. And right now,  
5    they can go to print, and if that means going to the local  
6    Sheetz one day and picking up a paper to be able to find it  
7    and read it, to where they don't have that access through  
8    internet. And is that a concern? Is that something that  
9    you've considered?

10                    I love the bill and that we have multiple  
11    options to go with. I'm not crazy about getting away from  
12    the print -- at least not right now until we get rural  
13    broadband up to where it needs to be where everybody has  
14    access to it.

15                    Thank you.

16                    MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Mr. Gerdes, you  
17    had indicated that you would like to respond.

18                    MR. GERDES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19                    Representative, to your point, yes. You  
20    know, I think one of the things that we've all seen coming  
21    out of this pandemic is our holes in our broadband coverage  
22    across the Commonwealth. And I know, not only is the state  
23    looking at it, but the federal government is looking at  
24    addressing this. There's federal money that's starting to  
25    come through, most recently with the American Rescue Plan

1 money. But that is a concern. However, you know, having  
2 that flexibility is important for our members.

3 And just to jump back, Chairman Freeman, with  
4 your question as well.

5 We're seeing in a lot of areas where that  
6 broadband access isn't there, there isn't print access. But  
7 also, when there is online, there's now an option to not  
8 only print, but to pay for the online. We're being charged  
9 for online access, and then the taxpayers are also being hit  
10 when they go to the publication's website, they have to  
11 become a subscriber. Then they have to pay twice,  
12 basically, for the same amount of information. Whereas if  
13 I'm going to be searching something, I'm going to look --  
14 you know, I'm a little biased -- I'm going to be looking for  
15 the township where I live and look there first for that  
16 information.

17 Broadband is a concern, and it's one that  
18 we're looking to help you-all address overall for the  
19 Commonwealth.

20 REPRESENTATIVE RIGBY: As I said, I think  
21 it's a great bill; just wondering if it's not a little too  
22 soon, that's all.

23 Thank you, Chairman.

24 Thank you.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: I'll call on --



1 I'm sorry.

2 MR. TROXELL: Could I --

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Absolutely, Mr.  
4 Troxell. Go ahead.

5 MR. TROXELL: -- kind of, you know, fill in a  
6 little bit on that, Representative Rigby, because that's a  
7 good point. You know, can we all of a sudden just switch  
8 over? And that's very -- you know, you just never know.

9 What we've tried to do in years past is use  
10 other publications, like community papers, which are  
11 mentioned in the bill. A community paper actually is fully  
12 audited different than your general circulation papers  
13 because it's fully audited by being placed in each mailbox  
14 address of that municipality wherein the service is  
15 provided. And this is something -- a free paper that's put  
16 out. You can subscribe, but I would get it free if I could.

17 But these can be printed and help make that  
18 transition into -- I think, you know, it's been alluded to  
19 where the pandemic has kind of moved us into having to think  
20 creatively and move past things. So, you know, having  
21 worked this thing for over 20 years, you know, and seeing  
22 all the different methodologies, all the different  
23 approaches to it, all the different chairs that have been in  
24 the committee, and members. I think we've found -- this one  
25 really, kind of, like, has workability. And I would hope

1 that the NewsMedia Association would kind of, like, work  
2 closely and not just oppose as we've had to deal with in  
3 years past, because this is getting very close, very close  
4 to where we want to be.

5 Thank you.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
7 Mr. Troxell.

8 Amy, I believe you wanted to add something?

9 MS. STURGES: I do. Thank you very much.

10 I just wanted to add that the beauty of this  
11 legislation is the flexibility, and that at the local level,  
12 our governing bodies need to look at what makes the most  
13 sense for their community.

14 If there isn't adequate internet access, I  
15 don't think that this would be a viable option at this time.  
16 But as we move forward, as my other panelists have  
17 mentioned, I think we're going to solve that internet  
18 broadband issue in the future. And if we can start by  
19 giving options to local government, those that do have good  
20 coverage in their communities would be able to use this --  
21 would be able to use the internet and advertising online as  
22 an option.

23 Thanks.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
25 much, Amy.

1 Representative Hamm, I believe you have a  
2 question.

3 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: Thank you, Chairman.  
4 Commissioner, thank you for being here.  
5 Thank you for your testimony.

6 I'm a local government guy. I served as  
7 township supervisor and borough manager.

8 When you say \$40,000 a year, what percentage  
9 of your budget in Bradford County is that?

10 MR. MILLER: Percentage -- it's hard to do  
11 the math right off the top of my head, but it amounts to a  
12 dollar for every citizen in the county, basically.

13 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: What's your total  
14 budget in Bradford County?

15 MR. MILLER: 75 million.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: So it's \$40,000 of --

17 MR. MILLER: 60,000.

18 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: 60 -- 60,000 of a \$75  
19 million budget?

20 MR. MILLER: Yes.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: Okay. Thank you.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
23 Representative.

24 I have a follow-up. I don't know which of  
25 you may want to address it, if you can, but it's a follow-up

1 to Representative Rigby's question. And that is, when we're  
2 talking about websites, can anyone give me a number in terms  
3 of the municipalities in the Commonwealth that do currently  
4 have websites?

5 (No response.)

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. It looks  
7 like -- okay. Well, if you could come up with that answer,  
8 we would certainly appreciate that.

9 Mr. Troxell, did you have something you  
10 wanted to add?

11 MR. TROXELL: No. I don't have a distinct  
12 number at this point. However, we do provide -- I can get  
13 back to our folks -- I can back to the committee with that  
14 number. But we find an amazing amount -- actually, we're  
15 going to a virtual annual conference later, which I want to  
16 thank both chairmen for participating in, and that's  
17 something that's going to be going out to the members.

18 So I can pull those numbers from something  
19 like that and see how many have websites. But I want to say  
20 it's over half my membership, and my membership is about  
21 250-plus boroughs.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. I think  
23 that's important for us to know because if, you know, the  
24 internet access is fine -- but it really doesn't do much if  
25 they don't have a website. And, you know, I would

1 understand that maybe some of these very small communities  
2 would not have a website, but that would be good. If you  
3 could find that for us, we would appreciate it.

4 MR. TROXELL: Yeah, that's where that free  
5 paper comes in. You know what I mean? Because you'll  
6 find -- hey, that's what you'll find because they fill that  
7 void.

8 But I could look those up too, how many have  
9 access to a free paper. I'll get some information for the  
10 committee.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you. We  
12 appreciate that.

13 Joe?

14 MR. GERDES: Mr. Chairman, I will get you an  
15 exact number as well. But what I can say is that we have  
16 seen quite a number of townships, of our member townships,  
17 that have reached out to PSATS to ask for our help in  
18 setting up websites, particularly during the last year,  
19 where they've needed help to get up and running and what  
20 kind of information is out there.

21 I also spoke recently with the Office of Open  
22 Records. Liz Wagenseller is working on criteria to go out  
23 and help municipality governments on what information needs  
24 to be on their websites to make them compliant with the  
25 Right-to-Know laws.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
2 much.

3 Are there any other questions either -- I'm  
4 sorry. Yes, the executive director has some information he  
5 would like to share with us.

6 MR. GAERTNER: Representative Rigby, on the  
7 issue of internet access, since 2013, the PUC has certified  
8 that every citizen in the state has access to internet. It  
9 doesn't meet the broadband definition, what you're referring  
10 to, but since 2013, the PUC has certified that the internet  
11 is available to every resident of the state and for the  
12 other members as well.

13 REPRESENTATIVE RIGBY: Maybe physically  
14 available, financially not so.

15 MR. GAERTNER: Understandable, yes.  
16 Physically available, if they want to have access to it, it  
17 is there for everyone.

18 REPRESENTATIVE RIGBY: Thank you.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Are there any  
20 other questions or comments from any of the members here in  
21 person or online?

22 (No response.)

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay, I see none.

24 So we will thank Panel Number 1.

25 Commissioner Miller, thank you for making the

1 trip here today.

2 And we thank Mr. Gerdes, Ms. Sturges, and  
3 Mr. Troxell; thank you very much.

4 MR. MILLER: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. Our next  
6 panel will consist of Bob Rolley -- Bob is the publisher of  
7 the Williamsport Sun-Gazette and The (Lock Haven) Express --  
8 as well as Brad Simpson, who is the president of the  
9 Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association.

10 So, gentlemen, you may take your time, take  
11 your seat, and get comfortable.

12 MR. SIMPSON: Thank you very much.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: It was agreed  
14 that each of you would give us three minutes of testimony  
15 and then we would then move into Q and A.

16 So, gentlemen, thank you both for being here,  
17 it's greatly appreciated. Whichever one of you would like  
18 to start first is fine.

19 MR. ROLLEY: Sure. Thanks very much.

20 Good morning, Chairmen Knowles, Freeman, and  
21 members of the House Local Government Committee, including  
22 Representatives Wheeland and Hamm from my hometown.

23 My name is Bob Rolley, publisher of the  
24 Williamsport Sun-Gazette and The (Lock Haven) Express,  
25 community newspapers and websites. I've been in the

1 newspaper business for 40 years starting when I was in  
2 college, and I delivered newspapers to carriers. Later, I  
3 interned, became a reporter, and I cut my teeth on local  
4 government, business and industry, and of course, Little  
5 League Baseball. It shaped my life and compelled me to  
6 become a community volunteer, a civic leader, and through  
7 Chambers of Commerce, education foundations, merchant  
8 groups, and Kiwanis. Our newspapers are proud members of  
9 the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association.

10 I'm here today because this is critically  
11 important. Public notices are essential to our readers,  
12 your constituents, and Pennsylvania taxpayers as local  
13 newspapers are delivered to homes and on the web and  
14 offices, businesses, stores. We are out there covering  
15 important issues to your constituents every day. We cover  
16 townships, borough city councils, county commissioners,  
17 school boards, and of course, sporting events, businesses,  
18 and what's going on in this beautiful building.

19 We report the joy and the happiness, the good  
20 and the bad, the progress and the change. We connect  
21 people. This was never so more true than during COVID. Our  
22 readers depended on us like never before. Since many could  
23 not get out of their homes, the newspaper brought them joy  
24 and connected them to their community.

25 And to health care providers, clinics, COVID



1 test and vaccination sites, our online numbers were through  
2 the roof during COVID and continued to grow dramatically.  
3 SunGazette.com, for example, is on target to achieve  
4 20 million page views this year. LockHaven.com is  
5 approaching 10 million views.

6 All of our public and legal notices are  
7 placed on [www.publicnoticepa.com](http://www.publicnoticepa.com) for all to read for free.  
8 We have 30,000 -- we have a database of 30,000 e-mail  
9 addresses between these papers. We have 8500 weekly  
10 newsletter subscribers through the e-mail. We have 40,000  
11 Facebook followers in the Sun-Gazette alone. We produce  
12 three to four to five community videos per week.

13 Just like our news stories tell you what is  
14 happening in your communities, so do public notices. Giving  
15 local municipalities and school districts the option to take  
16 public notices out of print newspapers would be devastating  
17 to my two newspapers and those across the state. We are a  
18 business, and just like other businesses during COVID, we  
19 were hit hard. As businesses closed or slowed, it hurt our  
20 advertising sales and revenue. We had to make some tough  
21 decisions. We rightsized, but we came back stronger than  
22 ever.

23 But really, one of the most important  
24 arguments I can make to you today is that we give local  
25 government, which spends taxpayer money to place public

1 legal notices in newspapers of general circulation, a return  
2 on their investment. We regularly and consistently cover  
3 local government meetings, issues, and controversies. We  
4 receive requests from public servants to cover their  
5 meetings. We are dedicated to that mission. We have long  
6 relationships with our local public servants.

7 Let me give you a couple of examples.

8 Woodward Township in Clinton County recently abolished its  
9 sewer authority. Not realizing that it had to assume the  
10 authority's debt under the Local Government Unit Act, that  
11 meant the township's own borrowing capacity maxed out just  
12 when they were ready to sign on the dotted line on a loan to  
13 buy a direly needed fire truck.

14 They're stuck in controversy now. They have  
15 to rescind what they did. We covered two meetings and a  
16 public hearing. Until we wrote the story, so that we could  
17 understand how that worked and what happened -- because even  
18 the solicitor wasn't aware that the debt limit was assumed  
19 and affected the township.

20 There's other examples, I'll cut through a  
21 couple. Another one relates to the controversial school  
22 closure plan in the Jersey Shore Area School District. It  
23 held a special meeting, one of many, that we learned about  
24 through public notices. And then we relayed that  
25 information to our readers prior to the meeting, which also

1 we covered. Oftentimes, these notices are on the same day  
2 as the special meeting, which in turn gives readers little  
3 notice before a meeting like this, where a major decision  
4 could be made, happens. In this instance, we saw it the day  
5 before, we were able to call more attention to it.

6           And in my written testimony, I provided links  
7 for those stories, if you'd like to look at those.

8           You know, we understand there's a cost to  
9 public notices, but transparency and information to the  
10 public is key. The cost to school districts, counties, and  
11 municipalities pay is a fraction of their overall budgets.  
12 We count on that revenue. And if this bill passes, our two  
13 newspapers and the other five dailies in our group --  
14 Washington, Lewistown, Warren, Uniontown, Altoona -- surely  
15 will have to cut staff or perhaps worse. Studies show that  
16 when local newspapers are not covering local governments,  
17 taxes go up and corruption occurs.

18           Public notices are just a small part of our  
19 duty to report events. Any change in our local environment  
20 can have profound consequences for us, depending on your  
21 viewpoint. Some of us might welcome the recycling center  
22 down the road, as it would be more convenient; others may  
23 see additional traffic as an unwelcomed nuisance.

24           But whatever your view, the important  
25 principle is that you're made aware of the proposed changes

1 before they get the green light. That way the pros and cons  
2 can be debated openly, and everyone is given the opportunity  
3 to have their say. Newspapers have an extremely powerful  
4 reach and a unique connection with local communities. We  
5 are at the disposal of local officials when they need to  
6 communicate with the public, and we help to promote their  
7 information, issues, and message.

8           Again, the notices on our websites are free  
9 to the public. Our newspaper publishes notices in the print  
10 edition, on our websites, and uploads to the statewide  
11 website, thanks to the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association.

12           When local officials send us public notices,  
13 we review, edit, and place those notices for free as a  
14 service. In fact, we have saved local governments and  
15 school districts from publishing incorrect notices that had  
16 wrong dates or wrong information. I can't tell you how many  
17 times that's happened. We bend over backwards for our local  
18 officials on public notices. We recently also invested in  
19 new computers and operating systems to allow our staff to  
20 work remotely to communicate directly with local government  
21 officials to place their legal notices, even after hours.

22           When our subscribers read our newspaper, the  
23 notices are right there for them to see and what is  
24 happening in their community so they can be an active  
25 participant. Right-to-Know is headlined over the legal

1 notices on each of our print publications. We also have  
2 another weekly and a weekly shopper.

3           And there is the issue of broadband. There's  
4 no question about it, including where we do business in  
5 central and north central Pennsylvania. Many rural areas  
6 simply don't have broadband, and add to that, our large  
7 senior population, in accessing notices is an issue.  
8 Because of these concerns, many taxpayers rely on our  
9 newspapers and those across the state for their information.

10           We are independent of government. It defies  
11 logic to allow local agencies to post their notices on their  
12 own websites. Who's going to monitor to see if these  
13 notices are accurate and posted in a timely fashion?

14           Many of my local municipalities do not even  
15 have a website, or if they do, they are not updated, or they  
16 use social media. Many have small staffs and are working  
17 hard to fulfill constituent requests. Why would we want to  
18 add public notices to their plate? Our websites are  
19 dynamic. They are updated constantly. That's why we have  
20 such large and growing audiences. We want to continue to  
21 provide our community and our readers with quality, local  
22 journalism and public information. This bill will harm our  
23 ability to keep doing that.

24           We urge you to vote "no" on House Bill 955.

25 Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
2 much, Mr. Rolley.

3 Mr. Simpson.

4 MR. SIMPSON: Thank you.

5 Good morning, Chairman Knowles, Chairman  
6 Freeman, and members of the House Local Government  
7 Committee.

8 My name is Brad Simpson, president of the  
9 Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association. PNMA is the statewide  
10 trade association for newspapers and online publications,  
11 and we have more than 300 print, digital, and media-related  
12 organizations as our members. Thank you for allowing me to  
13 testify today in opposition of House Bill 955.

14 You should have also received the coalition  
15 letter with numerous other organizations opposed to this  
16 bill, and additionally, the NAACP Pennsylvania State  
17 Conference, and Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources have  
18 signed on since we submitted our testimony.

19 Our members have covered the local news in  
20 your local communities, some dating back for hundreds of  
21 years. They are the fabric of your town. And during the  
22 pandemic, your constituents turned to their local newspapers  
23 in print and digitally in droves. They showed to their  
24 readers, your constituents, that they are the most trusted  
25 and reliable source for this information.

1           Public notices have been published in  
2 newspapers for centuries, and they inform taxpayers of tax  
3 and fee increases, constitutional amendments, zoning  
4 changes, home foreclosures, valid questions, and other  
5 life-altering government actions before they happen.

6           Public notices ensure that citizens have  
7 access to the information they need to stay informed and  
8 actively involved in government decision-making. Public  
9 notices are essential to our democracy, but unfortunately,  
10 this bill threatens their vital role. House Bill 955  
11 proposes to disrupt the process for publishing public  
12 notices with an unnecessary and imprudent shift away from  
13 newspapers which are already ensured their largest public  
14 exposure.

15           Our members print these notices in their  
16 newspapers as well as post them on their individual  
17 websites, not behind paywalls. In addition, Pennsylvania  
18 newspapers already fund and support a statewide, searchable  
19 public notice database at no additional cost to taxpayers or  
20 government. Newspapers statewide upload notices to the site  
21 daily. Public notices appear on the newspaper websites and  
22 on the statewide site for free for maximum transparency.  
23 Public notices are the only ads that receive this free  
24 online placement in an aggregated database. Our members  
25 have done all this to better serve their communities and

1 make sure the maximum number of eyes see these very  
2 important notices.

3           While this bill will damage transparency, it  
4 will also damage the newspaper industry and the local  
5 journalism upon which your communities rely. Newspapers are  
6 every bit a part of mainstream as the local bank, coffee  
7 shop, diner, and pizza place. While the revenue newspapers  
8 receive is a minuscule percentage of the overall budgets of  
9 these public entities, it is still revenue that the  
10 newspapers count on as part of their overall advertising  
11 revenue. With lost revenue from public notices, our members  
12 will be forced to cut jobs or, even worse, close their  
13 doors.

14           Moreover, taking functions and jobs away from  
15 private industry in favor of a government takeover is simply  
16 not consistent with the free market. Unlike newspapers,  
17 government is not driven by the free market to operate  
18 effective websites. Traffic to government-controlled sites  
19 is so low it cannot be measured. Some smaller agencies do  
20 not even have websites, but if they do, many are neither  
21 searchable nor frequently updated.

22           Variations of this bill have been around for  
23 more than a decade. It was not good public policy back  
24 then, and it is not good public policy now.

25           Public notices must remain in newspapers of



1 general circulation in print and online to reach the widest  
2 audience of taxpayers. If this bill comes to a vote, our  
3 members urge a "no" vote on House Bill 955.

4 Thank you very much for your time today.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
6 much, Mr. Simpson.

7 We're going to take a question from Chairman  
8 Freeman, followed by Representative Maloney.

9 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you,  
10 gentlemen, for your testimony. I appreciate it.

11 You touched on some very good points. I do  
12 have some concerns about the legislation and its impact; and  
13 you've touched on many of those.

14 One thing I wanted to make clear also for the  
15 record -- it's my understanding that we actually passed  
16 legislation several years ago which requires newspapers to  
17 offer municipalities the lowest possible price on any public  
18 notices.

19 Is that your understanding?

20 MR. SIMPSON: Yes.

21 MR. ROLLEY: Yes.

22 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: So it is the  
23 lowest possible price that is provided.

24 MR. ROLLEY: I have not raised my rates in a  
25 decade, and I don't intend to ever raise them again while

1 I'm managing. A buck 70 a line, so a small meeting notice  
2 is a few bucks, really, if you look at that.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Yeah.

4 I'm sorry?

5 MR. ROLLEY: Sorry, I talk low.

6 I said, ours is a buck 70 a line -- the Lock  
7 Haven paper. And so a short meeting notice is, what, five  
8 lines, it's 12, 13 dollars, plus the proof of publication  
9 fee which is maybe another 4 or 5 dollars.

10 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: And as follow up  
11 too when it comes to the number of notices that have to be  
12 published, do you have a rough ballpark of what most  
13 municipalities in your neck of the woods -- how many notices  
14 do they put in in the course of a year?

15 MR. ROLLEY: I don't have that. You know --  
16 no, I don't have that number. But it's not that many. You  
17 know, we don't live on this revenue.

18 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Right.

19 MR. ROLLEY: It's very important. It's  
20 cyclical -- so you know that the municipalities are doing  
21 budget work in the fall, so -- and the 30-day public notice  
22 for review at the township building. So the fall sees more  
23 zoning issues. I mean, it's frequent for the larger, more  
24 active -- if there's land developments and that kind of  
25 thing.

1           But, no, I don't have a big figure. But it  
2 is cyclical because it's based on the budget session. And I  
3 know the things that come through land developments and that  
4 kind of thing and issues.

5           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: And I assume it's  
6 probably safe to say that, for many of our smaller  
7 municipalities, you may end up with only a couple in each  
8 year. The initial notice saying, "Our meetings of council  
9 will occur on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month."  
10 Once that's in the paper, that satisfies the Sunshine  
11 requirement of notification, and they don't have to put that  
12 in before every meeting because everyone knows it's the  
13 second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

14           MR. ROLLEY: Right. That's exactly right.  
15 The Second Class Township Code is the first Monday of  
16 January, reorganization meeting. They set those dates and  
17 other things, and then there's (inaudible) a special meeting  
18 or a hearing on a controversial issue. So you're correct.

19           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: And you site the  
20 notice for budget, but that's once a year --

21           MR. ROLLEY: Right.

22           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: -- typically, as  
23 well.

24           Also, you both touched on a point that I  
25 think is very important for us to consider. Obviously, this

1 legislation is motivated by saving tax dollars, to some  
2 extent, but I think one of the things that newspapers do  
3 provide is a second set of eyes. One is to make sure  
4 notices are properly constructed, that they are providing  
5 the right information to readers, to ensure that there's no  
6 mistakes in that regard, but two, also, as a role, as sort  
7 of a gatekeeper, to make sure that notices are being  
8 published properly, not that they wouldn't if the  
9 municipality went on its own website, but it's more internal  
10 with that. You don't have an outside source kind of looking  
11 over the shoulder to make sure it's being done right. And  
12 that's something I think we have to weigh as policymakers in  
13 considering this legislation. So that's a very good point.

14                   And then, finally, I just want to ask your  
15 thoughts on the question I posed to the local government  
16 panel.

17                   We live in a time in our society when choice  
18 is everywhere. We have choice in so many things, and  
19 sometimes it's overwhelming. I am of the certain age where  
20 I remember having one phone company and one electric  
21 company. Now I am inundated, as is every consumer, with  
22 people wanting me to use their product or change providers.  
23 And when it comes to the sources of information that one  
24 could provide for, under this legislation, there are options  
25 of one through seven.

1           Do you foresee, as my concern is, that by  
2 having so many different options -- although it provides  
3 flexibility, which is one of the main intents -- it also  
4 could become very confusing for the public to know where  
5 they go to find out what's happening in Township A, in  
6 Borough B, or in City C because each one of them might offer  
7 a different one of the one through seven options. And that  
8 could pose concerns even for those who wish to bid on  
9 contracts as they try and navigate and figure out, "Where do  
10 I find this information?"

11                   Is that the relevant concern?

12           MR. SIMPSON: Absolutely.

13           One thing too to touch upon, you know to  
14 expand on your note there, is that not only are these  
15 notices appearing in the newspapers, but the reporters --  
16 Bob's reporters and all my members' reporters are also  
17 covering these notices.

18           So in the example of a county that may have  
19 40 municipalities and they have seven choices, that is a  
20 litany of options that different notices can be at. And the  
21 public information that these newspapers provide in terms of  
22 the coverage of what's happening in their local communities  
23 is that much more difficult.

24           MR. ROLLEY: Publicnoticepa.com is a model.

25           If you go to the site, it's so easy to navigate. Everything

1 is there. Our reporters use it constantly. And, you know,  
2 I would say that other states should emulate that.

3           You know, again, since -- I'll talk about  
4 that return on investment. That's such an important thing.  
5 Sending our reporters out to these townships and boroughs  
6 and school boards that call us and want us to come. They  
7 need attention. They've got controversial issues. That's  
8 the return on the investment that we make. And that's what  
9 I'm asking you guys to focus on today. That's a very  
10 important...

11           You know, what you're talking about, if you  
12 have notices all over the place -- and we see that today  
13 with information, it becomes disinformation, you know, in  
14 other cases. But you're definitely right. I would agree  
15 with that completely. One stop shop is what we are, and we  
16 think that's very valuable.

17           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you very  
18 much. Thank you for your testimony.

19           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you, Mr.  
21 Chairman.

22           Remotely, Representative Maloney, followed by  
23 Representative Stambaugh.

24           REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Chairman. Can you hear me?

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: We can.

2 REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Okay, thank you.

3 Gentlemen, with the news media comments and  
4 things of interest and concern, I do have a couple of  
5 question-type statements.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Excuse me,  
7 Representative? Could you move up closer to the mic? We're  
8 hearing you, but it could be a little bit louder, unless  
9 this is --

10 REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Okay. I'll try to  
11 do my best with that. Can you hear me now?

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Oh, my gosh.  
13 Yes, we can hear you now. In fact, we can hear you very  
14 well. You can back it off a little bit.

15 REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: All right. Sounds  
16 like a commercial. All right.

17 So to the news media, with respect to the  
18 things I heard here that our folks have choices and  
19 interests, and there's really a personal need sometimes with  
20 respect to what we're interested in or how they get their  
21 information, a lot of good discussion. I've always given  
22 great respect and support to the news media, thinking very  
23 much on the traditional way of picking up your newspaper and  
24 more or less -- for lack of a better way to say it -- seeing  
25 what's happening.

1                   However, knowing that things have been  
2 changing, I think, somewhat dramatically in the last several  
3 years, we have a lot of opportunities, as we heard today,  
4 along with choice. So a lot of us have what we would call  
5 e-mail blasts; businesses have e-mail blasts, all sorts of  
6 even county governments and locals have what we would  
7 consider -- I think one of you mentioned that you have  
8 30,000 contacts and so on.

9                   So my question is with respect to even back  
10 in Berks County, where we have several newspapers; some do a  
11 good job, some do otherwise. My question would be, how do  
12 you folks choose what you feel is important to print?

13                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Gentlemen?

14                   MR. ROLLEY: As it refers to local  
15 government, what I would say is we have beat coverages. And  
16 the beats that we cover, the townships, the boroughs, the  
17 counties are where our population -- most of our population  
18 are, and we cover them regularly. And then we take calls  
19 from other townships. If something is going on in, you  
20 know, another rural area that they think is important -- and  
21 maybe it's a road issue or anything -- then we go there.  
22 We'll rotate out of our beat and go there.

23                   It really -- you know, we look at the notices  
24 and we'll see, for example, a special meeting on -- oh,  
25 goodness, there's all kinds of issues -- but a special



1 meeting on -- a boundary dispute is a recent one. We had a  
2 couple townships having a boundary dispute. We are right at  
3 that because that has got to be decided. It's a boundary  
4 dispute. School boards -- special meeting on closing  
5 schools. And it's very politically charged, as you can  
6 imagine -- city school versus rural school. We'll see that  
7 notice.

8                   So we go where the notices take us. To a  
9 large extent, we go where they take us because the notices  
10 will say what the issue is for the special meeting. So  
11 that's really the best answer I can give you.

12                   REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Okay. So a couple  
13 of things on that sake --

14                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Dave, can you --  
15 I mean, we have about five minutes, and I have two other  
16 people. Are you okay or do you have a quick follow-up?

17                   REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Yeah, I do.

18                   So I'm just going to say to you then in that  
19 respect then, is my experience has been very negative with  
20 respect to what you people choose to print. I actually have  
21 a landmark boundary dispute that was never covered. And  
22 frankly, I send press releases as the state representative  
23 to my local newspaper, and they do not get printed.

24                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Representative,  
25 respectfully, I don't know that that really has anything to

1 do with this issue. And --

2 REPRESENTATIVE MALONEY: Well, it does  
3 because I don't understand what's so important about some  
4 people choosing what gets printed and not, and how we know  
5 what is important, to look elsewhere, that's why.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. Well,  
7 thank you very much, Representative.

8 Representative Stambaugh, followed by  
9 Representative Hamm. And I would ask you to keep your  
10 questions as brief as possible. Thank you.

11 REPRESENTATIVE STAMBAUGH: Yes, good morning.  
12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Beyond transparency, these notices to me are  
14 historical documents. And one of the concerns I have that's  
15 really not addressed in this legislation is the archiving of  
16 these. On print they're archived. You can go to the  
17 newspaper office, find an old, you know, in the archives,  
18 bound volumes, whatever. You can go and you can research,  
19 you know, X, Y, Z Township's ordinances for a certain year  
20 or whatever.

21 My concern is -- not just with this, but a  
22 lot of things is -- you know, as we go to a more and more  
23 digital system, we don't have a proper way to archive those  
24 documents. I mean, this allows basically, township -- if  
25 they want to use the local shopper or to use their own

1 website to keep a copy of that document for three years, and  
2 after that, it's gone.

3 So I just want to know how you guys feel  
4 about that in -- you know, just address it real quickly.

5 MR. ROLLEY: I mean, that's critically  
6 important for archiving. We still do microfilm, which is  
7 available at your library. We have PDF -- we're working on  
8 a searchable database of a PDF of all our pages. Our  
9 websites allow you to go back and look. And we take calls  
10 from people who want to come in, and we allow them to come  
11 in and take a look at our print-bound books. The newspapers  
12 that we also archive in shelving and then get to a  
13 print-bound book. I mean, we make that as much available as  
14 possible. I'm not sure about PA -- [publicnoticepa.com](http://publicnoticepa.com).  
15 It's archivable; you can go back and look at everything.

16 MR. SIMPSON: Yes, it is. I don't know what  
17 the actual length of time is, but we can get that  
18 information to you, in terms of the archiving.

19 But, you know, newspapers have always  
20 historically been the history books. And you know, you can  
21 go back in time and look at what has happened in that  
22 microfilm and the archives at your local libraries. And  
23 that's been a proud history for us for hundreds of years in  
24 Pennsylvania and will be for hundreds more.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very

1 much.

2 We have Representative Hamm.

3 REPRESENTATIVE HAMM: Thank you, Chairman.

4 Mr. Rolley, thank you for being here and  
5 providing your testimony.

6 Two questions, going to be real simple --  
7 one, what does this bill mean to the Williamsport  
8 Sun-Gazette, The (Lock Haven) Express, if it passes for your  
9 staff? And then, two, whatever that effect is on your  
10 staffing, what effect does that now have on local government  
11 coverage?

12 MR. ROLLEY: Job cuts, job cuts and reduced  
13 capacity to cover local meetings, local government meetings,  
14 clearly.

15 The timing of this is such that -- I wanted  
16 to say this because it's a state committee -- I just  
17 hired -- in the past year, I hired a girl, a kid from  
18 Clarion, a kid from Shippensburg, Lock Haven University, and  
19 more recently, IUP, all journalism graduates, who are coming  
20 in partly funded and paid for by these legal notices. But  
21 again, we don't live and die by them. You know, we're  
22 seeing some recovery as the restrictions are lifted; so we  
23 invest. And again, I talk about the return on investment,  
24 so...

25 Yeah, that's what would happen, no question

1 about it.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
3 Representative.

4 I have -- and thank you, sir.

5 I have -- this will be the final question,  
6 unless somebody else has something. I doubt that you're  
7 going to have this information, but maybe you can get back  
8 to us. That would be relative to your subscriptions, 20  
9 years ago, 10 years ago, and currently. It would be  
10 interesting to see how that pans out in terms of the number  
11 of subscriptions that you have for your newspapers.

12 So does anyone else have any other questions?

13 (No response.)

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. If not, we  
15 certainly want to thank both of you gentlemen for joining us  
16 today. We greatly appreciate it, and your testimony is very  
17 valuable. Thank you.

18 MR. ROLLEY: Thank you.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. We're  
20 going to move on to -- actually, our next testifier will be  
21 joining us remotely. That is Jennifer Pesanka -- I hope I'm  
22 pronouncing that correctly. Jennifer is the business  
23 manager for the Brentwood Borough School District.

24 So, Jennifer, can you hear us?

25 MS. PESANKA: I can hear you. Can you hear

1 me?

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: We can hear you  
3 very well, yes. So we'll give you five minutes of time to  
4 testify, Jennifer, so you can begin when you're ready.

5 MS. PESANKA: Well, good morning, Chairman  
6 Knowles and Chairman Freeman, and members of the House Local  
7 Government Committee. Thank you for inviting the  
8 Pennsylvania School Boards Association to present testimony  
9 today regarding House Bill 955, which provides much needed  
10 flexibility for school districts and local governments and  
11 how public notices must be advertised.

12 My name is Jennifer Pesanka and I am the  
13 business manager for Brentwood Borough School District.  
14 I've been working in school district business for 19 years,  
15 10 of which I've been the business manager here at  
16 Brentwood. I'm excited to speak with you today concerning  
17 House Bill 955.

18 The current law was enacted in a time before  
19 the internet was created. And the internet has opened up  
20 new ways for people to communicate with each other whether  
21 it be across the globe or locally in their communities. In  
22 turn, it has changed the way that people are accessing  
23 important information within their community.

24 Here at Brentwood, we used to have two daily  
25 published newspapers, the Post-Gazette and the

1 Tribune-Review. In addition, we had one weekly published  
2 newspaper for our region of the Pittsburgh area called the  
3 South Hills Record. Currently the Post-Gazette is an online  
4 digital newspaper. It does print one daily running which is  
5 only on Sunday; however, the purchase of the Sunday edition  
6 of the Post-Gazette has decreased that even grocery store  
7 chains in our area no longer carry the Sunday edition for  
8 people to purchase.

9           The second daily paper, the Tribune-Review,  
10 has moved to a completely digital format in our area. And  
11 lastly, the South Hills Record is only printed once a week.  
12 And a person must subscribe to the printed version to be  
13 mailed to them on a weekly basis. The amount of pages in  
14 the South Hill Record has dwindled over the past several  
15 years, and as one would look through it now, you are left  
16 wondering how much longer it can hold on to its printed  
17 status.

18           As these newspapers continue to move to a  
19 completely digital format, the Brentwood Borough School  
20 District is fast approaching a time when it will find itself  
21 unable to comply with the current law of advertising in  
22 print.

23           With the changes from printed versions to  
24 digital newspapers, the price of our advertisements have  
25 gone up. In the past, our advertisements were much longer,

1 and it cost the district much less. While the cost to  
2 advertise is not a significant number in our budget, we are  
3 always looking for ways to cut costs in order to put money  
4 back to our classrooms. Therefore, to keep up with our  
5 rising cost of advertisements, the district has pulled  
6 detail from our ads and instead have our advertisements  
7 point the readers back to the district's website for more  
8 detail. Since people are more apt to look for our website,  
9 more information is being added there on a daily basis to  
10 keep the community informed.

11           Lead time for advertisement has also  
12 increased and changed among the three newspapers in our  
13 area. Due to the increased lead time needed to advertise,  
14 it has been difficult to meet the current advertising laws  
15 for such things as special meetings. These special meetings  
16 have to occur based on our advertisement deadlines and not  
17 necessarily based on when we need them. If we cannot run an  
18 advertisement in time, a school district could miss out on  
19 pricing for contracts.

20           House Bill 955 would give a school district  
21 more flexibility in how it can advertise. For areas across  
22 the state that are seeing a more digital newspaper  
23 footprint, like here at Brentwood, it would give us and  
24 others options such as our website or on the newspaper's  
25 website. Yet for areas across the state not yet seeing a



1 loss of their newspapers to digital print, they can still  
2 advertise in general circulation in their area. Each  
3 district will be more able to pick one or more ways to best  
4 fit their community.

5           The bill gives significant transparency to  
6 the public by requiring school districts to adopt a  
7 resolution to declare their methods by which they will  
8 advertise. It publicly states what the district's  
9 intentions are and what methods will be used. It allows for  
10 public comment.

11           The bill also requires a public notice  
12 regarding the methods of advertising chosen to be placed in  
13 the newspaper of general circulation, first and further  
14 provides for the posting of each advertisement in the  
15 district office, as well as retention, for at least three  
16 years.

17           By offering more options for advertising, we  
18 can ensure that a greater number of our community is reached  
19 in a more timely manner and a more cost-effective manner.  
20 To modernize the antiquated public notice requirements in  
21 the current law with House Bill 955 it would not diminish  
22 the overall intent for government transparency. Instead,  
23 with the flexibility it provides, it would serve to grant  
24 the public greater access to information to which they are  
25 entitled.

1                   On behalf of PSBA and the Brentwood Borough  
2 School District, I would like to thank you for the  
3 opportunity to support our public schools and for the  
4 opportunity to provide input here today. And I will be  
5 happy to take any questions you might have.

6                   MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
7 much, Jennifer.

8                   I have a question, maybe I should ask  
9 Representative Brooks if -- why are the Pirates not having  
10 such a good year?

11                   Maybe Representative Brooks can help us out  
12 there, but make it quick.

13                   REPRESENTATIVE BROOKS: One of the questions  
14 I did have based on what you said -- are you representing  
15 the school or are you representing the association? Because  
16 I was a little confused when you were going through...

17                   MS. PESANKA: The association asked me to  
18 speak on their behalf.

19                   REPRESENTATIVE BROOKS: It sounded like your  
20 school district is a pretty large school district and well,  
21 kind of set up to do a lot of the communications. I'm just  
22 wondering if your school district is typical for school  
23 districts.

24                   MS. PESANKA: We are actually a very small  
25 school district. We have 1200 students, and we are only

1 1.5 miles large.

2 REPRESENTATIVE BROOKS: So you would consider  
3 yourself just average in relation to all the other schools?

4 MS. PESANKA: Correct.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
6 Representative.

7 Can you tell me in terms of your budget, what  
8 percentage is utilized for advertising? Can you give us a  
9 ballpark figure on that?

10 MS. PESANKA: For advertising, it is less  
11 than 1 percent. However, when I did go back to look at it,  
12 even though it is so small, I looked back -- all the way  
13 back to 2017-18 and since that time, it has increased over  
14 200 percent for us in order to advertise since everything  
15 has moved away from the printed advertising here.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. How about  
17 in terms of websites, do you have any information in terms  
18 of the number, percentage of schools that have websites?  
19 Would you know that?

20 MS. PESANKA: I do not have that offhand. I  
21 do know here in Allegheny County, in which I work, every  
22 school district here does have one.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay. Is there  
24 anyone else who has any questions?

25 (No response.)

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Chairman Freeman?

2 (No response.)

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay, Jennifer,  
4 we thank you very much for joining us remotely today. And  
5 if you could -- any information that you feel is valuable,  
6 if you could forward that to us, we would greatly appreciate  
7 it.

8 MS. PESANKA: Sure. I will get you that  
9 number, the number of schools that have websites.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
11 much.

12 MS. PESANKA: Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: So our last panel  
14 is going to give no testimony, but they've agreed to make  
15 themselves available. And before they make their way to the  
16 table, I would ask -- this would be Diane Moore, who is a  
17 communication supervisor for the Republican Communications  
18 Department, and Bob Caton, the social media manager for the  
19 Office of the Democratic Leader.

20 Anyone who might have any technical questions  
21 regarding any online stuff?

22 Chairman Freeman.

23 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chairman.

25 I'll wait for both of them to get to the

1 mics.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thanks, Chairman.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you both  
4 for being here too and making yourselves available to answer  
5 our technical questions. You two are the go-to people when  
6 it comes to IT operations, and we appreciate your presence  
7 here.

8 I just wanted to raise a couple of concerns  
9 too regarding the idea of going online for notices. In many  
10 respects, having the access to the internet and to online  
11 has opened up our world in many ways and provides avenues  
12 for new information. However, we've also seen an increase  
13 in hacking into many sources of computer information, most  
14 recently, the Colonial Pipeline and what took place there.

15 I guess my general question to both of you  
16 is, is there any way of foolproofing (sic) to prevent  
17 hacking when it comes to any kind of online site, a website,  
18 or notice provision that goes online as opposed to doing it  
19 in print?

20 MS. MOORE: I don't know that there's  
21 100 percent foolproof. I'm sure the U.S. government would  
22 love to have that answer for it to be 100 percent foolproof.

23 In just my observation of a lot of municipal  
24 websites around the Commonwealth, it has been -- there's a  
25 wide diversion in quality. And if they are purchasing from

1 companies that would be more influential on security, you  
2 know, so be it, but there are also ones that just put up  
3 small web pages that, perhaps, just a constituent put up for  
4 them or something like that.

5 So there is no 100 percent guarantee, and  
6 access to security would be across the board as to where  
7 they're purchasing the hosting from and so forth.

8 MR. CATON: Not just from a security  
9 standpoint, but from a content standpoint, your website is  
10 only as good as the person running the website. So, you  
11 know, obviously there's very little concern with an  
12 organization the size of Montgomery County, you know, with a  
13 population larger than many states, but when you talk about  
14 a township the size of Ohio pyle, and Fayette with only 59  
15 residents, for them to have a website that would have the  
16 same level of security, the same level of operation would,  
17 of course, require a much larger commitment on their part.

18 You know, your security is only as good as  
19 your password. The number one most used password in America  
20 is still 123456.

21 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: I didn't realize  
22 that.

23 MR. CATON: It's kind of scary. And we've  
24 all seen the pictures online of the people who have their  
25 passwords stuck to their screens.

1                   Now, you know, is there a true financial  
2 benefit for a bad actor to go after a small township? Is a  
3 ransomware attack going to get them the money that they  
4 would get from a Colonial Pipeline? Clearly no. But, you  
5 know, once again, the quality of your security is only as  
6 good as the quality of the person doing the work. Are they  
7 contracted out, as Diane mentioned too? Or is it something  
8 like -- "Well, my brother-in-law knows computers, so he's  
9 going to do our website."

10                   MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Right.

11                   MR. CATON: And how often would that be  
12 updated? How secure would that be? So you get what you pay  
13 for.

14                   MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: And you're right,  
15 the impact on one small municipality might not be great  
16 financially for someone who wants to scam or hack, but as  
17 we've seen too often, many scammers will go across a broad  
18 range of targets. So it could not just be one municipality,  
19 but it could be a whole slew of second-class townships that  
20 get hit with the same hacking or scamming at the same time.

21                   I don't need a new warranty for my car, for  
22 one, but that's what we're facing in today's society -- is  
23 we're constantly being bombarded by these attempts to scam  
24 us and to take us -- take advantage of us.

25                   In reaction to the issue of who sets it up --

1 and your point is very well taken. The site is only as good  
2 as the person who sets it up, both in terms of security and  
3 in terms of content. The likelihood, given the vast  
4 majority of municipalities in Pennsylvania being very small  
5 in size and population, is that they would go to outside  
6 providers; isn't that correct?

7 MR. CATON: Probably safe to assume, unless  
8 they have somebody on site that would do it. A larger  
9 municipality -- you know, every county has a website, even  
10 Sullivan County has a website. Most of the school districts  
11 will have a computer department to handle their internal  
12 network. So creating a public facing website for them isn't  
13 as much of a challenge as it would be for a small  
14 municipality that doesn't have that kind of resource  
15 in-house.

16 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: You would concur?  
17 (Inaudible.)

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: And you know, I  
19 have a great deal of faith in our local officials. I think  
20 they do a good job. It's not a job that is readily  
21 appreciated, but they put in a lot of hours for very little  
22 compensation. However, as in all institutions and all  
23 levels of government, there occasionally are bad actors.  
24 And is it conceivable that if the information being provided  
25 is through a website, that there could be internal tampering



1 particularly if the individual at the municipality decides  
2 not to post the notices in the format that makes them  
3 understood or readily available or easily found? I mean,  
4 you can go to a website and lose yourself trying to find  
5 where you want to go for the information you're seeking; is  
6 that not correct?

7 MS. MOORE: I mean, that's correct.

8 I mean, posting content on a website, you  
9 know, as Bob mentioned, is only as good as the person who  
10 was constructing the website. So that's always a  
11 possibility. There's always a possibility that something  
12 could be misconstrued in how it's posted either  
13 inadvertently or purposeful. But, you know, I mean,  
14 hopefully just protocols set up within a municipality would  
15 help that to some degree.

16 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Right.

17 MR. CATON: To that end, as the gentleman  
18 from the Township Supervisors Association noted, having a  
19 centralized resource for townships to use as a template  
20 would certainly help solve some of those problems and  
21 certainly would help deal with some of the security issues  
22 and also have a little bit of consistency across the board  
23 so you're not dealing with the proverbial brother-in-law  
24 slapping together a website using a third party.

25 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Which if you're

1 trying to save costs, you might be tempted to do.

2           Yeah, I think one of the great challenges of  
3 our society today is that we do have more choice, we do have  
4 more options, but they come in many different formats. And  
5 so we almost have to learn from the start how to utilize  
6 those different options and choices if we're going to  
7 navigate them properly.

8           But thank you, both, for being here. We  
9 appreciate you making yourself available.

10           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you,  
11 Chairman.

12           I would ask anyone who has any questions to  
13 indicate that you do. But while we're waiting for you to do  
14 so, I would just ask -- and this comes from a guy who  
15 probably makes an average of 10 pocket calls in the course  
16 of a day -- but I wonder -- Rob can verify that, as well as  
17 my staff.

18           MR. GAERTNER: I have a three-minute  
19 voicemail from his pocket yesterday.

20           MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: The committee  
21 finally agrees on something. That's refreshing.

22           So my question would be, how much time and  
23 possibly the cost in terms of setting up a website -- can  
24 you talk a little bit about that?

25           MR. CATON: Once again, it certainly varies.

1 You know, you can use a Wix -- there's a website called Wix  
2 that you can set up a very basic, very low interactivity  
3 website that hosts some basic pictures, hosts some basic  
4 information like a sub page allowing you to look at ads,  
5 upcoming meetings -- up to contracting with a company that  
6 can build you something that looks as good as -- you know,  
7 looks as good as Google can make it for you and can monitor  
8 the analytics to tell you who's coming to that website,  
9 where they're coming from.

10           You know, one of the things with using the  
11 website, you'll never -- for a government entity, you'll  
12 never really know if you're quote, unquote, making the sale.  
13 Are you really getting someone who's going to go there and  
14 act upon the information they find?

15           Just from a basic cost, you know, it can be  
16 done very affordably for a small municipality to do it with  
17 the existing -- some of the existing infrastructure that's  
18 already online.

19           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Thank you very  
20 much.

21           Is there anyone else who may have questions?

22           (No response.)

23           MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: Okay.

24           Thank you very much, Diane.

25           Thank you, Bob. We certainly appreciate it.

1                   And we want to express appreciation to all of  
2 our testifiers for joining us remotely or for joining us  
3 here in this beautiful, new hearing room in the Irvis  
4 building.

5                   Before I call on Chairman Freeman, I just  
6 want to say that we do have written testimony that will be  
7 made available to the members.

8                   I also want to express thank you to my staff  
9 because anytime you do something like this, it requires a  
10 lot of work.

11                   And I want to thank Rob Gaertner, my  
12 executive director, as well as Kyle Schaeffer, my research  
13 analyst, and the two Laurens, Lauren E. Miller and Lauren A.  
14 Miller. So if I pocket call people, can you imagine how I  
15 deal with that?

16                   And, you know, I'll just close by saying that  
17 this is a very, very interesting issue, and I think it was  
18 Mr. Troxell who had indicated that it's been around for  
19 decades. When it was brought to me, I said that I wanted to  
20 learn more about it, and you folks have made that possible  
21 today. So we thank you very much.

22                   So Chairman Freeman?

23                   MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chairman.

25                   I too want to just thank all those who

1 testified today, made themselves available for our  
2 questions. It was a very informative hearing.

3 I thank the Chairman for an excellent  
4 hearing. He did a good job, much appreciated.

5 And it's always good when the legislature can  
6 pore down on the details of legislation, get a better handle  
7 on legislation, and so that we can do our job properly as  
8 policymakers.

9 I also wanted to add for the record that we  
10 did receive a communication from Holly Lubart from the  
11 newspaper association, listing a coalition of groups that  
12 have expressed their opposition to the bill. And I hope it  
13 will become part of the record as well.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: (Inaudible.)

15 MINORITY CHAIRMAN FREEMAN: Good. Okay, just  
16 so it's available.

17 And I too would like to thank my staff for  
18 their help in this and the help every day in my job and  
19 making our office run well; Jon Castelli, my executive  
20 director and Bri Medevich, my research assistant -- my two  
21 good right arms -- so thank you both for your effort here  
22 today and for your help on an ongoing basis.

23 Mr. Chairman, thanks again for a great  
24 hearing.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN KNOWLES: So I can handle a

1 hearing, but I can't handle a cell phone.

2 Okay. This meeting will be adjourned.

3 Thank you, all, again.

4 (The hearing concluded at 10:50 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the within proceedings, and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

*Summer A Miller*

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Summer A. Miller, Court Reporter  
Notary Public