



MONTGOMERY BAR ASSOCIATION

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May 10, 2021

The Honorable Jerry Knowles
Capitol Office
314C Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202124
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2124

RE: Public Hearing on HB 955: Local Government Advertising Requirements

Dear Representative Knowles –

The Montgomery Bar Association (MBA) sends this letter in anticipation of the upcoming legislative hearing on HB955 that would allow counties, municipalities, and school districts to advertise public notices either electronically or in printed format by choosing from a menu of options. The MBA appreciates that this legislation would not relieve a local government unit of its duty to publish information in a county legal journal if required by law; however, as HB955 will be before your committee for review, the MBA believes it is imperative to take this opportunity to highlight the important work and distinct nature of the county legal journals published by the local bar associations.

Legal journals present the legal community and public alike with an insider's view of legal matters from a local perspective. Between the covers of these important publications, you will find explanations of local cases, statutes, legal notices, and administrative rules. In addition, the following important legal functions and notice requirements are provided to the legal community and the public:

- The Conference of County Legal Journals (CCLJ) provides a centralized database incorporating the publications of the official legal journals of all 67 counties in Pennsylvania and provides a statewide internet database to research legal notices cost free to taxpayers.
- Spreading notices across more than 4,000 different local government and county court system websites will result in taxpayers, business owners, contractors and lawyers not knowing where to look for notices that would impact their town/municipality/county. The county legal journals synthesize this important information.
- Changing the requirements for public notices will cause individuals to be unaware of where to access the information they are entitled to be aware of by law.
- Public notices must be archived and verified by an independent third party (fact checking the notices and keeping them as originally posted) to withstand legal challenges regarding their sufficiency.
- Further, the revenues that are obtained by the bar associations from the legal journals are reinvested into the community by offering *pro-bono* work and reduced fee legal services, and public services/programs that may not be available to the same degree as they exist now without these funds.

To that end, the MBA as well as the statewide Conference of County Legal Journals (CCLJ) oppose any legislation removing the requirement that certain public notices be placed in county legal journals where the rules of the court have designated such county legal journals as the legal instrument of publication of such notices.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline M. Reynolds

Jacqueline M. Reynolds, Esquire
President