



OHIO NEWS MEDIA ASSOCIATION | 1335 DUBLIN ROAD, SUITE 216-B | COLUMBUS OH 43215  
MONICA NIEPORTE, PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ohio House Ways and Means Committee  
***House Bill 602 / Property Tax Foreclosure Notices***  
**Testimony of Monica Nieporte**  
*President & Executive Director / Ohio News Media Association*  
**May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding House Bill 602. My name is Monica Nieporte and I am here today on behalf of Ohio's daily and weekly newspapers.

It has been a longstanding function of the news media to assist government in providing notice to citizens regarding the exercise of governmental power. This is a role that my members take very seriously, and we strive to ensure that Ohio's state and local governments receive maximum benefit, value and impact for their notices.

As you know, HB 602 would modify the public notice requirements for property tax foreclosure actions by eliminating the second and third publication of the notice in a newspaper of general circulation. In recent years, we have seen other pieces of legislation that proposed to eliminate notices or move them to governmental websites. I believe that this approach is flawed and will result in less awareness of governmental activities by impacted citizens.

In 2011, the Ohio General Assembly made significant updates to Ohio's public notice laws that resulted in savings for local governments. Most notably, for many public notices with multiple publication requirements, governments were given the ability to abbreviate or truncate notices after the initial notice was printed. In most instances, this reduced printing costs by 50% or more for local government advertisers. Further, local governments have the ability to recover the cost of many public notices related to delinquent taxes and foreclosures. These changes and have reduced the cost of public notice and allowed that cost to be passed on.

Additionally, in 2014 the Ohio News Media Association launched [publicnoticesohio.com](http://publicnoticesohio.com), a statewide website that aggregates all public notices run in Ohio newspapers. As part of the 2014 changes, the General Assembly required that newspapers post all public notices on their websites at no additional cost to the



OHIO NEWS MEDIA ASSOCIATION | 1335 DUBLIN ROAD, SUITE 216-B | COLUMBUS OH 43215  
MONICA NIEPORTE, PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

government. News media websites receive significantly more traffic than governmental sites. The end result of legislative changes to public notice in 2011 and 2014 was a significant increase in the value of public notice to deliver expanded saturation at a lower cost.

We frequently hear that public notices are expensive and a nuisance, however they have many positive benefits. Greater awareness of a sheriff's sale will bring more potential buyers while increased knowledge of governmental procurement opportunities will bring additional responsive bidders. Further, notices ensure that citizens are given proper notification from an independent party in the event that their property may be seized through foreclosure.

Moving to online notices, especially on governmental websites, would reduce awareness and put citizens, especially those in areas of the state with poor internet service, at a disadvantage. Further, we have not seen evidence that notices for tax foreclosure actions are ineffective. Moving this particular notice online would create inconsistency with all other notices, which have a print component for all publications.

Given that the 2011 reform package allowed for truncated second and third notices, we believe that amending HB 602 to keep all three print notices while allowing shortened runs of the second and third notice would be ideal. This would achieve a cost savings of more than 50% while maintaining consistency and adequate notice of foreclosure actions.

In closing, I want to restate that Ohio newspapers have worked and will continue to work to ensure public notices are effective and a good value for government. It is my belief and concern that any near-term savings from reduced or online-only notices will be offset by reduced awareness. I appreciate your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.