

Opinion Independent vs. Liberal

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From The Middle

When Someone Says They Want To Keep
Something Out Of The Newspaper,
Doesn't It Make You Ask: "Why?"



By Dane Hicks
Kansas Informer

On the heels of a monumental national election in which Americans decidedly voted to seize back their government and force it to be accountable to the citizenry, someone in the Kansas legislature has decided it's another perfect time to try to pull the wool over the eyes of Sunflower State residents by restricting our advance notice when government plans to do something to us.

In truth the bill before the Kansas House Local Government Committee which would allow local cities, counties and school districts to tuck their legally mandated Public Notices away on their own websites rather than pay the local newspaper to print them is probably as much about cutting the throat of the state's starving but still pesky newspaper industry as it is an attempt to obscure governmental transparency. Either way, if such a cloak-and-dagger measure ever passes the legislature, it will be the public that gets screwed the worst in the long run.

CITY PULLS LEGAL NOTICES AMID BEEF WITH PAPER

Let's take a revealing quiz; how many of you turned off Facebook or Netflix long enough today to cruise the summary ordinances posted on your city website? Is it part of your daily or weekly routine? How many of you logged on to your county's site to find the deadline for filing to run for school board or city council this year? How many of you have ever even seen your city or county website?

And maybe you think those notices, with their legal jargon and their court case numbers and their deadlines and their foreclosure announcements and their protest periods aren't really all that important after all. You probably will become a believer when someone wants to build a hog farm south of your house or a wind farm across your fence and your heads up came too late,

because the zoning change proposal was buried somewhere in a never-accessed link on your county's website.

Truth be told, public officials who understand their jobs and their obligation to be open with their citizenry about government actions already know active publication of those notices in the local newspaper makes the most sense. Indeed, it gives them the best defense against the ire that sometimes follows crucial government decisions and actions. Good elected officials and bureaucrats know the best way to CYA is to make sure the people who hold sway over your job are well informed, often and early.

Not only that, but newspaper publication of some of those notices is an important revenue driver for government – look at the threat issued each summer by the county to expose property owners who aren't paying their property taxes in the annual delinquent tax list published every August, as well as publication of the list of properties to be sold at periodic tax sales. County officials broadly admit how effective that pressure tactic is – and what's even better is that the government collects a publication fee from late-paying property owners and foreclosed property buyers to offset those advertising costs when they do in fact eventually pay those past due amounts.

Some governments resent paying any money to newspapers because newspapers that are doing their jobs sometimes report negative news about local government. Those public officials would be just as happy if their local newspaper starved to death and withered on the vine – that would make their lives much easier, or so they believe. They're not about to switch the county's road department over to electric road graders or replace the city municipal court with an Artificial Intelligence vending machine that dispenses rulings– but an un-

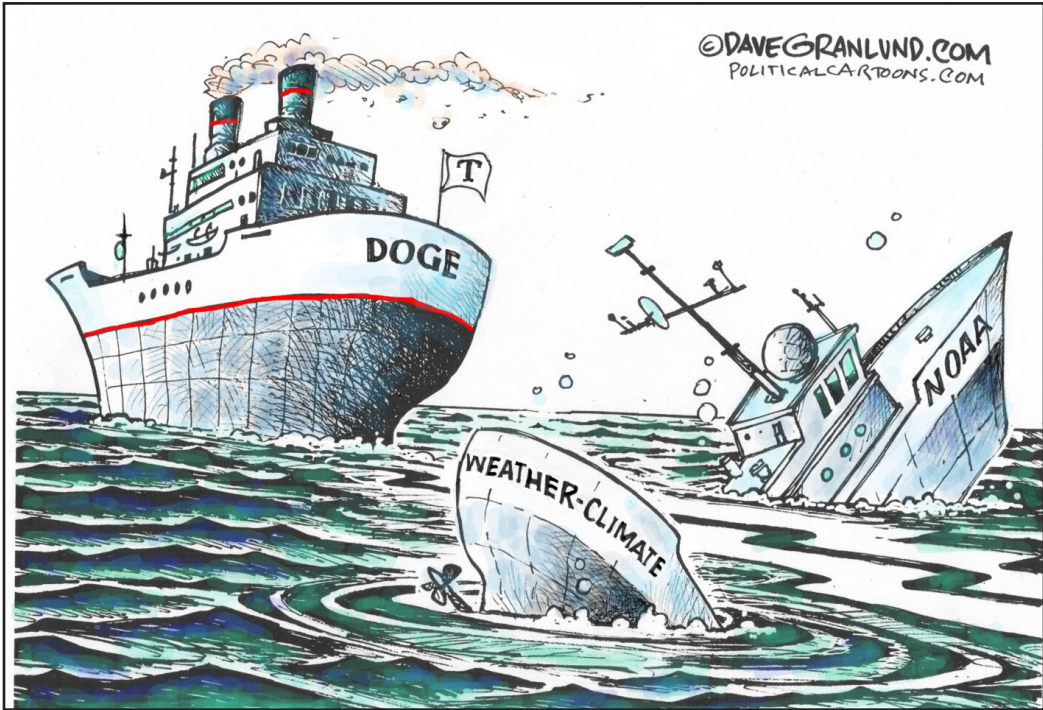
workable, ineffective method of advising the public of government actions is just fine with them.

To understand the true scope of the financial impact these paid notices have on your city or county or school district budget – take the amount they spend on public notice advertising each year and calculate the percentage it reflects of their total budget. At a tiny portion of 1 percent, it may be the most cost effective thing your local government does.

In Kansas, the argument is moot anyway, but that doesn't keep some legislator with his or her nose out of joint about newspapers from introducing a bill to end those notices every year under the guise of saving local governments money placing their notices online. Newspapers in the state already place all their public notices online for free at no extra charge – at their own expense, mind you (you can see all the public notices for every county in Kansas at www.kansaspublicnotices.com and on the menu above on this page), and it's done without adding the responsibility to some employee already working at city hall or worse, having to hire or pay a new employee extra to do the job.

Notices published the old fashioned way – ink pressed into paper – can't be jimmied with later; they can't be buried in a digital abyss, they can't be hacked, they can't be accidentally deleted or edited later outside of the venue in which they were originally voted on and approved. That's perhaps the biggest advantage of traditional publishing – once it's in print, it stays there. That's a benefit the digital world will never provide.

There are good ideas in government and bad ones. Selling Kansans a pig in poke under the guise of saving a tiny fraction of government funds while restricting the public's access to important information – that's always a bad idea.



From The Left

America's Heroes Must Surely Be Weeping

By Rudy Taylor
Taylor Newspapers Publisher

The Greatest Generation came home proudly in 1945 from World War II. They were victorious, both in Europe and North Africa, and with a string of awful battles on Pacific islands as they moved toward their win over Japan.

On the beaches of Normandy, they joined forces with allies from France, Canada, Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand, marching across France to ultimately overtake the despot Adolph Hitler who had obliterated freedom to favor his own brand of world power.

It was 80 years ago that victory was proclaimed in Europe, and 11 months later a treaty was signed to end the war with Japan.

Every soldier, airman and marine looked toward their homeland, and tearful reunions were held in thousands of American homes. The fighters who returned were mere shells of their former youth, many of them leaving limbs on the battle fields or in the oceans. We knew many of them who carried bullets and shrapnel inside their bodies until they day they died.

We honored them at

every opportunity. They marched at the front our parades, and sat in honored chairs at Memorial Day services.

And, when they died, we told their stories, gave touching tributes and, without exception, wiped away tears.

But today, it is they who weep.

The events of the past 30 days in our nation have caused angst to the

American veterans shook as the U.S.A. sided with Russia, North Korea, China and Belarus. Our new compatriots would not call out Russia for what it is — an international criminal.

Of course, any U.N. resolution is non-binding upon the nations of the world, but everyone in the room got the message, and it was a regretful scrawl.

Until our elected House and Senate members — yes, even from Kansas — clear the gravel from their quiet throats and speak up

against our top leadership that has abandoned the Greatest Generation victories of World War II, we will continue to slumber quietly as our freedoms fade away.

God bless our proud Veterans who have spent the past 80 years leading our parades of freedom. Our nation has never asked for repayment for anything after a war has ended. We simply saw our neighbors being trampled by anarchy, and we spent our blood and lives to make life a better place for them.

Until now.

Will future generations ever call us the greatest anything?

That question should make all of us lose sleep.

*The events of the past 30 days
in our nation have caused angst
to the patriotism that has
traditionally bonded us.*

patriotism that has traditionally bonded us. We are seeing and hearing familiar tones of power, and the lack of compassion exhibited by our top leaders is shameful.

A resolution that was introduced on Monday in the United Nations General Assembly was like a rerun of an old movie. It gave freedom-loving nations the opportunity to condemn Russia and its unprovoked attack of Ukraine.

Our friends from World War II linked arms in their united vote of condemnation of Vladimir Putin and Russia. Such votes have taken place before, always with America's solid support. But on Monday, the graves of

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