

In Our Opinion

Every year, an Illinois legislator proposes a bill to remove public notices from being published in newspapers and allow units of government to post them to their websites. They must think they are saving taxpayers money, and that newspapers no longer are relevant.

This year is no different. House Bill 811 has been filed but not yet been assigned to a committee. As other bills that have come and gone before it, HB 811 is a bad idea. Lawmakers should reject it, as they have in the past.

Newspapers have played a vital role in providing transparency about

government through the publication of public notices. It's worked for more than 150 years. Now, with the digital reach of newspapers through their websites and the statewide public notice site run by Illinois newspapers, notifying the public has never been more efficient, effective and impactful. Posting notices to newspaper websites and the statewide site are at no additional cost to government and is intended to provide even greater public access to these notices.

Conversely, there are nearly 7,000 units of government in Illinois. Only about half have a website.

How efficient and effective would that be?

Units of government are required by statute to post meeting dates, agendas and minutes. Yet, many don't. There are more than 1,400 townships in Illinois, and the vast majority don't have a website but for the ones that do only 53 percent comply with the required posting of meeting dates, agendas and minutes. Why would different results be expected from the same government units if they control the posting of public notices?

We all know there is money to be saved by being more efficient. How about

taking a realistic look at eliminating the seemingly redundant units of government? Illinois has far more units of government than any other state. Florida has more than 7 million more residents than Illinois but fewer than a quarter the number of government units. Drainage districts, road districts and mosquito abatement districts could and should become part of the function of county governments. The largest mosquito abatement district in Illinois is the South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District and it spent less than \$100 in 2020 on public notices, which is far less than the

\$25,000 it spent on memberships and conferences. The cost of public notices is one of the smallest expenses of government entities.

So, it's not surprising that eliminating public notices from newspapers won't reduce taxes. Realistically no unit of government is going to lower its tax levy. So, if the Legislature really wants to lower public notice expense and ultimately property taxes it should address the number of governmental entities in the state.

Newspapers across Illinois provide access to public notices and verify compliance by govern-

ment units. They also serve as a permanent record of public notices.

The majority of the more than 400 newspapers in Illinois are small businesses. Like every other small business, newspapers have been hit hard by the pandemic. Removing public notices will make it even harder for newspapers to do what they do best - serve and inform their communities.

We urge you to contact your local political representatives today voicing your opposition to House Bill 811.

Special Enrollment Period now open until May for health insurance

Act now through May 15 if you now need health insurance.

With many people anxious to bid 2020 goodbye, it's possible they overlooked an important year-end deadline: enrolling for health insurance.

"Our communities, nation and even the world, were facing a number of new challenges and competing priorities this fall. It's easy to overlook, have missed or completely

tuned out the annual call to enroll for health insurance," Charles Joujoute, consumer sales manager for Health Alliance, said.

In January, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to open up the federal health insurance marketplace for three months starting Feb. 15 so uninsured people can buy a plan and those who want to change their marketplace coverage can do so.

"There are a lot of un-

insured people who are eligible for assistance paying their monthly premium or costs when they get care," he said. "We're hoping to reach out to those people now and get them signed up."

The enrollment period continues through May 15. Uninsured people can look for plans during that time and enroll at HealthCare.gov or call Health Alliance at (877) 686-1168 to discuss their op-

tions.

"If you have lost your job or found yourself without coverage, now is the time to take action," Joujoute said. "This is an ideal time to check your coverage. Many people will find health insurance is more affordable than they thought."

According to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS):

9 out of 10 people who enrolled got financial

assistance.

3 out of 4 currently enrolled can find plans for \$50 or less.

Go to HealthCare.gov to learn more.

Individuals or families who purchase insurance through the HealthCare Marketplace, people younger than 65, those not on Medicare and those who are not covered at work or by a parents' plan (through age 26) are eligible.

"Many people are facing new health conditions during the pandemic such as unknown lingering effects from COVID, mental health needs and trouble or fear of accessing in-person healthcare," he said. "Having health insurance can ensure you receive care for these routine needs and manage cost for unforeseen disease or major injuries."

Illinois Sheriffs' Association announces college 2021-22 scholarships

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association announces that it will be awarding over \$58,000 in college scholarships throughout the State of Illinois to students wishing to pursue higher education during the 2021-2022 academic year. The scholarships are to be applied to tuition, books

and fees only. The student must be enrolled full-time at a certified institution of higher learning within the State of Illinois, full-time online learning is acceptable.

Sheriff Chris Sims, Moultrie County, will be awarding one scholarship in the amount of \$500.

There will be no restriction on any applicant by reason of race, age, creed, color, sex or national origin. The only limitations are as follows:

- Applicants must be permanent Illinois residents
- Scholarships must be utilized at institutions of

higher learning within the State of Illinois

• Students must be enrolled as a full-time student during the 2021-2022 school year (excluding summer session).

Applications are now available at your local Sheriff's office or on the ISA

Website <https://www.ilsheriff.org/youth-2/>

Students must complete the application; answer the essay question and return all documentation to the Sheriff's office in their permanent county of residence by March 15, 2021 (must be postmarked by this date). Directory of Sheriffs

offices available on our website <https://www.ilsheriff.org/sheriffs-directory/> For more information, please contact your local Sheriff's office, Illinois Sheriffs' Association, high school advising center or college financial aid office.

Lake Land College designs the Fall 2021 schedule around students

Lake Land College announced Monday that plans for Fall 2021 are designed around students. The fall schedule, published last week, includes a mix of in-person, virtual and online courses. When building a schedule, students can select the format that best fits their personal preference.

"We are excited to plan for a more traditional mix of

class offerings for the fall," President Josh Bullock said. "We are grateful for the resiliency of our students, faculty and staff. We have learned a great deal in the past 12 months and will be holding on to things that are working well in the online environment to support students and their learning."

"We are hopeful that our nation will continue on

a positive trajectory in mitigating COVID-19 and that employees and students will soon have the opportunity to receive a vaccination. We will remain flexible in planning, while closely following local, state and national guidelines," Bullock said.

"The safety protocols Lake Land College established a year ago are working well, and the college

plans to continue them into the summer and fall," Bullock added. "Facemasks, daily self-screenings and social distancing will continue to be required to maintain a safe learning environment."

The Summer and Fall Class Schedules are available on the college website at lakelandcollege.edu. Current and prospective

students can connect with campus offices or faculty and staff via phone, email, Zoom or in-person by appointment.

The summer schedule follows a more traditional summer mix of modalities where most classes are offered online or virtually, with some in-person options. In the fall schedule, students will have the option

to choose from in-person, online or virtual modalities for many classes. With virtual offerings, students can expect to meet online at specific scheduled times.

To learn more about the college or to get started in the enrollment process, visit lakelandcollege.edu/getting-started. Registration for both terms opens March 24.

Horizon Health offers healthcare scholarships to local students

Horizon Health and the Horizon Health Foundation of East Central Illinois are offering scholarships to local students to further their education in the medical field. Available scholarships are as follows:

PCH Volunteers' Scholarships

The Paris Community Hospital Volunteers are offering \$2,000 in scholarships for the 2021-2022 school year:

\$1,000 scholarship - Available to any Edgar County high school graduating senior.

\$1,000 scholarship - Available to any Horizon Health employee.

Doc Acklin Scholarships

Two graduating seniors from Paris Cooperative High School (one boy and one girl) will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarships are awarded to outstanding seniors who embody the character traits of the late Dr. James Acklin (scholastic ability, participation in athletics, and character).

The scholarships are funded through proceeds from the annual Doc Acklin Race. Dr. Acklin was a lifelong Paris resident and a family physician at Paris Community Hospital for 34 years. He was an avid athlete, coach, and fan of Paris High School athletics. He was a respected member of the Tigers' cross country team that captured an unprecedented four consecutive state championships from 1946-49.

Nursing Foundation Scholarships

Horizon Health's Department of Nursing is offering two \$500 scholarships to applicants who are currently enrolled in, or have been accepted into, a nursing program. The foundation is funded through various sources, including the annual Nursing Twilight Walk honoring all community nurses, the Nurs-

ing Honor Guard program, and private donations.

How to Apply

Applications can be completed online at MyHorizonHealth.org/Scholarships.

Completed applications must be received by Wednesday, April 14. For more information, contact Michelle Wilken at 217-466-4277 or MWilken@myhorizonhealth.org.



Let Us Bring Things Into Focus

Accepting VSP, Eye Med and Medicare!

Tuscola Eye Care & Sullivan Eye Care

We offer quality, one-stop vision care for the whole family.

Jamison T. Boyd, O.D.

www.tuscolaeyecare.com

Tuscola
253-2220

902 South Court
Suite 1

Sullivan
728-4451

108 E. Harrison

Ginger Denton
Designated Managing Broker
217-369-4864
Sue Falk, Broker
217-840-8048
LaVern Herschberger, Broker
217-294-4028
Merle Plank, Broker
217-369-0457



Buying or Selling - We Can Help
Residential Farmland Timber



221 Taylor Lane, Arthur - 3BR/2BA Ranch
Open Floor Plan, Tons of Updates, Looks like New!

Looking to Build? We have Lots Available:

ARTHUR

- Meadowview Phase 2: Lots 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20
- 2nd & Beech Street - .25 Acre Lot
- Rhema Drive - 106 Rhema, 108 Rhema & 110 Rhema

ATWOOD

- Royal Court - Lots 2, 3, 4, & 5

Call Us for More Information



www.legacylandco.com
Legacy Land Co. • 900 E Columbia, Arthur, IL 61911



Tri-County Journal

(217) 253-5086

View online at

www.thetuscolajournal.com