

Proposed SB 186 is a bad idea

There's a proposed piece of legislation going before the Georgia Senate Rules Committee this week. The gist is to give municipalities the option to move required legal notices out of newspapers and onto local governments' website. We think this is a bad idea, and the taxpaying public will not be as well informed.

Our opinion

One of the sponsors' arguments is that SB 186 could save counties as an average of \$900 per year. We think saving money is a wise thing, but we also think this is a classic "pennywise and pound foolish" measure. We challenge the savings. Who on the local governments' payroll is going to post these ads? Who will maintain the records and then provide certification?

If citizens don't have Internet, the proposal is for local governments to mail the legal notices. Won't those combined efforts cost more than \$900 a year? When questioned about those unknown costs, the sponsors responded, "Oh, there are plenty of third-party vendors who can provide those services." We bet those vendors will charge an average of more than \$900 per year. So, where's the savings? This doesn't pass the sniff test.

We contend there is no need to fix something that isn't broken. We believe taxpayers will not be as well informed as they currently are by relying on their local legal-organ newspaper. If the senators are concerned about expansion of coverage on the Internet, that issue is resolved already, too, without more legislation and expense. The Georgia Press Association, through georgiapublicnotice.com, posts all legal notices from all of Georgia's 159 counties. This is an added value at no extra charge to the notices printed in the local newspaper.

Should SB 186 clear the Rules Committee and reach the floor of the Senate, we hope Sen. John Wilkinson will do the right thing and vote against this bill. And if the measure clears the Senate and gets before the House, we trust State Reps. Dan Gasaway and Terry Rodgers will help vote it down.

Again, we believe the notion that saving taxpayer money is hollow. What we also believe is that there's an underlying motive - to create more secrecy. What we deserve and should always demand is more transparency in our state, local and national governments.



Riding roller coaster of Georgia climate

It's just about strange. Just over a week ago, Julie and I were throwing last minute things into the car to speed away to Florida, hastening to beat a winter storm descending onto Northeast Georgia Feb. 25.

The huge flakes were falling fast and furious at 5 p.m. as my windshield wipers batted them away. It was either snow, sleet or freezing rain from Cornelia to Madison.

Then it was a cold, driving rain which plagued me until we finally decided to toss in the towel when we got to Dublin. I am here to testify state

Highway 441 needs a fresh restriping. Off white is not the correct term in describing the almost non-existent markings.

Sunday, I was sitting on my Habersham County porch in 60-degree temperature. My aunt and uncle, Ruth and Kevin, were here from Canada. They live north of Toronto, which apparently has experienced its coldest winter ever. [I'm thinking maybe, just



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maybe, it was worse during the Ice Age.]

But cold it has been. Kevin said the temps were at -20 Celsius for a month. That's -4 Fahrenheit. "And it got colder at night," he told my father.

It was so cold the ground began freezing deeper and deeper. We're talking several feet deep. The city has aging infrastructure, including its waterlines. Breaks are numbering in the hundreds, Kevin

said. Some people have been without water for over a week. It became cold enough that the older streetcars, powered by electricity, wouldn't operate. Some of the diesel-fueled buses would not start, either.

Ruth and Kevin went back to "The Great White North" yesterday. Meanwhile, we enjoy the roller coaster of Georgia's climate. Now it's nice. Stay tuned. One thing is for sure: If you don't like the weather, it will soon change.

Donald Fraser is senior staff writer for The Northeast Georgian.

Who are your friends?

Who are your friends? No, really, who are your close, tell-anything-to, got-your-back, go-to-the-ends-of-the-earth friends?

I hear too many people who come into the jail start by saying, "I was with these friends" or "I was with my friend." The question I ask is, where are these so-called friends now? We have mixed up the word "friends" with buddies, acquaintances and just people we know, or other buddies' friends or whatever.

So let's see what Webster says the word friends mean. "Friend is a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard, or a person who gives assistance; patron; supporter." Or the definition we are most familiar with, "a person associated with another as a contact on a social-networking website."

Buddy is a comrade or chum. Acquaintance is a

person known to one, but usually not a close friend. We have watered down the word friend to mean all of these.

If you are friends with someone on Facebook or some other social media site, would you invite them into your home or have them spend the night?

So back to my first question, who are your friends? We are getting buddies and acquaintances confused with friends. A friend should be faithful to you, not spread what you and they talk about, and they should respect you. They should involve you and share with you.

A true friend should encourage you because we all need encouragement from time to time. They should need you for the ex-



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act same reasons. And they should defend you from the gossip train that affects us all.

If you run with the crowd, buddies, acquaintances, you will get run by the crowd or run over by the crowd. Friends need to earn the right to speak into your life.

They need to know the truth and live the truth. Ask these questions of your friends - Do they motivate me to love God more? Do they celebrate God's blessings in my life? Do they have my back? Do they hold me accountable? Do they live what they believe? Do they have the right "they" in their life? If your friends can't measure up to these questions then maybe they are the wrong friends.

I have many friends,

buddies and acquaintances in my life but I know who I can call and bare my soul to and not worry about them telling everyone what we talk about. I know who to call when I need someone to lean on and they will come running, even to the hospital, and hold my hand and let me cry on their shoulder.

Men, your wives better be your closest friend or she won't be your wife for long. But you also need a man, or several men, who you can talk to about man things and pray with and speak into your life.

But there is One who will stick closer than a brother and knows all our trials and concerns. All you have to do is believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart and you will be the friend that someone needs.

Joey Terrell is sheriff of Habersham County. Email him at jterrell@habershamga.com.

What's your view? We'd like to know

The Northeast Georgian welcomes all letters to the editor from its readers. Deadlines are 5 p.m. Friday for the mid-week edition; 8 a.m. Wednesday for the weekend edition. All writers are expected to follow our letters policy:

- Letters should be exclusive to The Northeast Georgian;
- Letters must include the writer's full name, street address and a daytime telephone number for verification. Writer's name and city of residence will be published - names cannot be withheld.
- Each letter must be an original - no photocopies.
- Letters should be 350 words or fewer.
- Letters submitted in all capital letters may be rejected.
- Only one letter per writer allowed in any 30-day period.
- We do not publish poems, excerpts from other publications or lengthy submissions of Scripture.
- All letters are subject to editing for grammar, clarity and appropriate content. Publication of any letter is the sole discretion of The Northeast Georgian.
- Letters that are unsigned, contain more than 350 words, contain disputes [between the writer and another person, group, church, educational institution or business] or personal attacks, endorse or criticize a business will not be published.

The Northeast Georgian

Our Mission

The Northeast Georgian is published with pride for the people of Habersham and adjoining counties by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens.

We believe that strong newspapers build strong communities - "Newspapers get things done!"

Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers.

This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

Tom Wood, Chairman
Dink NeSmith, President

County road crews do great job

To the editor:

Our Habersham County road maintenance crews do such a great job.

Thank you. Thank you Thank you.
John Hagan
Clarkesville

School superintendent election not good idea

To the editor:

During the early 1990s there was a large movement across the state of Georgia to do away with the election of the local superintendent of schools. I could not believe what I was reading in The Northeast Georgian on Feb. 27, with Sen. [John] Wilkinson to sponsor a Senate Bill to allow the return of the election of local school superinten-

dents.

We all know that politics will never be completely out of education, but this old process returns us to more of the same, plus divisive communities and schools. Things can get ugly and cruel. Educational systems do not need this.

The community has input through the local board of education. The reason superintendents have three-year contracts is because it is a state law. Change this and also make the state superintendent an appointed position. If it is not broke - why fix it?

Bill Chandler
Cornelia

Addressing death penalty

To the editor:

I very seldom address another letter writer but, if I may, I'll make an exception with Mary Ellen Myers.

Ms. Myers, in her letter, chose to defend Kelly Gissendaner, a woman con-

victed in the murder of her husband in 1997 and sentenced to death. For those not fluent in numbers, this murder was almost 18 years ago.

In Myers' glowing endorsement of Gissendaner's character, she describes Gissendaner as a woman who endured a troubled marriage, recognized her mistake, showed remorse, helped other women while she was incarcerated and was victimized by an "all male" parole board. According to Myers, Gissendaner is a woman of impeccable character who, if allowed, would make a productive citizen. She has just been mistreated by our system.

I've always been intrigued by the ability of some people to paint their own reality. I would ask Ms. Myers if she felt the same familiarity with the man who was murdered. Do you even know his name? Could he have been a productive citizen had Kelly Gissen-