

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Judiciary

BILL: CS/SB 380

INTRODUCER: Judiciary Committee and Senator Trumbull

SUBJECT: Legal Notices

DATE: December 2, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Davis	Cibula	JU	Fav/CS
2.			CA	
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 380 gives a municipality, the office of the clerk of the circuit court, and the office of the tax collector more control over where it may publish advertisements and legal notices. Currently, a county, municipality, school board, or other unit of local government or political subdivision may publish advertisements and legal notices *only* in a local newspaper or on the official website of their county or other private website designated by the county. Under the bill, municipalities, the offices of clerks of the circuit court, and the offices of tax collectors, are defined as special governmental agencies and have the option to publish advertisements and legal notices on their own official websites, a private website they designate, their county's website, a private website designated by the county, or in a local newspaper. An entity referred to as an "other unit of local government or political subdivision" will still be required to publish legal notices and advertisements on a county or county designated website.

The bill retains the requirements of existing law that the advertisements and legal notices posted on a website be in a searchable format, indicate the date of publication, and be more cost effective than publishing them in a newspaper.

The bill also establishes timeframes for publishing items on a website. If a legal notice or advertisement is published on one of the acceptable websites, and unless otherwise specified by law, it must be published continuously for 2 weeks if providing notice of the status of a government activity or be continuously published from the date of initial publication through the date of the event or activity.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Public Notice of Meetings

The State Constitution requires that all county, municipal, school district, or special district meetings be open and noticed to the public if official acts will be taken or if public business will be discussed or transacted. The State Constitution further authorizes the Legislature to enact laws that govern the enforcement of these provisions. The requirements for publishing legal notices and official advertisements are located in ch. 50, F.S.

Publication of Legal Notices and Advertisements

Prior to 2023, legal notices and advertisements were required by statute to be published in local newspapers. However, the Legislature enacted legislation that took effect on January 1, 2023, which permitted certain governmental agencies the option to publish those items on its county's official website or another website designated by the county.

These advertisements, for example, include the notices that a tax collector must publish in a local newspaper on November 1 or soon thereafter, stating that the tax roll is open for collection.¹ Once personal property taxes become delinquent, a tax collector must publish a list of the delinquent tax payers and the amount due.² A tax collector must also advertise the sale of tax certificates on real property which has delinquent taxes due. The advertisements for the sale of tax certificates must be placed in a newspaper once a week for 3 weeks.³

Definitions and Key Provisions of Existing Law

The term “governmental agency,” for purposes of ch. 50, F.S., “means a county, municipality, school board, or other unit of local government or political subdivision in the state.” If a governmental agency is authorized by ch. 50, F.S., to publish an advertisement or legal notice on a website instead of a newspaper, the website must be a “publicly accessible website.” These websites are limited to a county's official website or other private website that the county has designated for publishing legal notices and advertisements. It must be Internet accessible. The advertisements and legal notices posted there must be in searchable form and indicate the date when the advertisement or public notice was first published on the website. However, the cost of publishing advertisements and legal notices that may be posted on a website must be less than the cost of publishing those items in a newspaper.

If a governmental agency has at least 75 percent of its population located in a county with fewer than 160,000 residents, it may use a publicly accessible website to publish any required advertisements and legal notices. To do so, however, the governing body of the governmental agency must have first placed a notice in an appropriate newspaper and then held a public

¹ Section 197.322(2), F.S.

² Section 197.402(2), F.S.

³ Section 197.402(3), F.S.

hearing and determined that the residents have sufficient access to the Internet such that publishing the items will not unreasonably restrict public access.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Increased Website Publication Options for Municipalities, Clerks of the Circuit Court, and Tax Collectors

The bill gives a municipality, the office of the clerk of the circuit court, and the office of the tax collector more authority over where they publish advertisements and legal notices.

Currently, a “governmental agency” is defined as a county, municipality, school board, or other unit of local government or political subdivision. Each of those entities may publish advertisements and legal notices *only* in a local newspaper or on the official website of their county or other private website designated by the county. Under the bill, a municipality, the office of the clerk of the circuit court, and the office of the tax collector are defined as a “special governmental agency” and each is granted the option to publish advertisements and legal notices on:

- The official website of the special governmental agency’s county.
- A private website designated by the county.
- The special governmental agency’s official website.
- A private website designated by the special governmental agency.

As a result, special governmental agencies are no longer limited to publishing advertisements and legal notices in a newspaper, on their county’s website, or on a private website designated by the county. Smaller governmental units are still required to publish legal notices and advertisements on county or county designated websites.

Requirements for Posting Advertisements and Legal Notices on a Website

The bill keeps the existing law requirements that the advertisements and legal notices be posted on a website in a searchable form, indicate the date when the items were first published, and cost less than it would cost to publish the items in a newspaper.

Publication Timeframes

The bill also establishes timeframes for publishing items on a website. If a legal notice or advertisement is published on one of the acceptable websites, and unless otherwise specified by law, it must be published continuously for 2 weeks if providing notice of the status of a government activity or be continuously published from the date of initial publication through the date of the event of activity.

Website Publication for Governmental Agencies with Small Populations

The bill extends to a special governmental agency the right to publish legally required advertisements and public notices on a publicly accessible website in a county where 75 percent of the population is less than 160,000 residents. As in existing law, notice must have been provided that a public hearing would be held to determine that the residents have sufficient access to the Internet and it will not unreasonably restrict public access.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

The bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified in Article VII, s. 18 of the Florida Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Newspapers will lose advertising revenue to the extent that the bill shifts advertisements and legal notices away from newspapers to special governmental agency websites. However, the shift of the publication of advertisements and legal notices from one public website to another will not affect newspaper revenue.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may shift advertisements and legal notices away from county websites to the official websites of municipalities, clerks of the circuit court, and tax collectors. Any county revenue generated from the use of their websites by these three entities will be reduced accordingly.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 50.0311, 11.02, 45.031, 50.011, 90.902, 120.81, 121.055, 162.12, 190.005, 200.065, 849.38, 1001.372, and 1011.03.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Judiciary on December 2, 2025:

The committee substitute narrows the scope of the bill. The underlying bill arguably permits small governmental units to publish required advertisements and legal notices on their own official websites instead of on a county or county designated website. Under the committee substitute, only tax collectors, clerks of court, and municipalities may publish advertisements and legal notices on their websites or a private website they designate. The committee substitute also provides timeframes that control when and for how long items must be published.

B. Amendments:

None.