



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# KATHY BERNIER

February 11, 2016

## Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs *Testimony on Assembly Bill 694*

Good afternoon, Chairman Brooks and committee members. Thank you for scheduling Assembly Bill 694 for this public hearing and allowing me time to present testimony in favor.

Under current law, in every odd-numbered year, a county treasurer must publish a class 3 legal notice (once a week for three consecutive weeks) in a newspaper containing the names and last-known address of every owner of unclaimed property or security with a value of \$10 or more in that county.

This bill, which has received bi-partisan support, raises the minimum value of unclaimed property or security required to be published from \$10 to \$20. Additionally, the bill allows for the option to follow current law regarding publishing a class 3 notice OR, allows the treasurer to publish a class 1 notice (which would require publishing the full name and address of each owner of unclaimed property or security once) followed by a class 2 notice announcing that the list containing the full name and last-known address of each owner of unclaimed property, with a value greater than \$20, is available on the county's website and at the county treasurer's office.

With input from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association I drafted Assembly Amendment 1 which simply adds the Wisconsin newspapers internet website as another place where the class 2 notice must be made available if that option is chosen. We worked with the Newspaper Association and agree that this site, which archives all legal notices in the state, is an appropriate place for these notices to be posted as well.

We as legislators are familiar with the concept of having to do more with less. Assembly Bill 694 gives us the chance to provide common sense reform and cost-savings to county government while still requiring the same level of service, and even improving the communication of services as in the notice of unclaimed property. The Wisconsin County Treasurers Association has compiled some data regarding the cost of publishing a class 3 notice vs. the cost associated with publishing a class 1 notice followed by a class 2 notice. Their results show a cost saving across the state to county government. According to data collected, if every county chose the option provided under this bill, counties would realize a savings of roughly \$67,000.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for your interest in this bill and for holding this hearing. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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# DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

## Assembly Bill 694

I would like to thank you, Representative Brooks, for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 694 and allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of AB 694. This bill will make two minor changes regarding the publication of unclaimed property and securities. First, this bill will raise the minimum value of unclaimed property and securities that must be published and second, this bill will provide county treasurer's an additional method to publish these notices.

Under current law, in every odd-numbered year, a county treasurer must publish a class 3 legal notice in a newspaper containing the names and last-known address of every owner of unclaimed property or security with a minimum value of 10 dollars. A class 3 legal notice requires this information be published for three consecutive weeks.

Under AB 694, the minimum value of unclaimed property and securities will increase to 20 dollars. The county treasurer will also be able to publish a class 1 notice followed by a class 2 notice. The class 1 notice will require the full name and last-known address of each owner of unclaimed property or security to be published once. The class 2 notice will announce only that the list containing the full name and last-known address of each owner of unclaimed property or security can be found on the county's website and at the county treasurer's office. This notice will be published two weeks in a row.

Assembly Amendment 1 adds the Wisconsin newspapers legal notices website as a location to find the list containing the full name and last-known address of each owner of unclaimed property. The site is an archive of public notices dating back to February of 2006.

The option to publish one Class 1 notice followed by two Class 2 notices would save counties valuable financial resources while taking advantage of technological advancements. Under this bill, it is estimated that Wisconsin Counties can save over 67,000 dollars annually, or roughly two-thirds of their current expenses. Thank you again Representative Brooks and all committee members for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of AB 694.

Respectfully submitted,

Duey Stroebel



**TO:** Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs  
**FROM:** Beth Bennett, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association  
**DATE:** February 11, 2016  
**RE:** Assembly Bill 694

Good afternoon Chairman Brooks and committee members. My name is Beth Bennett, and I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. On behalf of our 221 member newspapers, I am submitting written testimony on Assembly Bill 694.

The Wisconsin Newspaper Association has prided itself on being the state's leading source for informing citizens of government notices. We take this responsibility seriously and are committed to the broad dissemination of notices to the public. These notices include advertisements for bids, notices of land use hearings and other hearings, financial reports, meeting proceedings, new ordinances and other local, county and state governmental actions.

Printing public notices in our member newspapers provides a critical link between the citizens of Wisconsin and their government. However, we also know that many people want to access public notices online. That's why the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, and our member papers, also provides access every single public notice in the state through the [wisconsinpublicnotices.org](http://wisconsinpublicnotices.org) web site.

Through this searchable online database your constituents can access every public notice from around the state. Searches can be filtered by key words, city, county, date and publication. Not only is this a wonderful tool for businesses and citizens alike, it serves as an archive for all public notices from across the state.

The [wisconsinpublicnotice.org](http://wisconsinpublicnotice.org) website is updated, maintained and managed by the WNA at no additional costs to the taxpayers as part of our public notice reimbursements, which is also determined by the state in most cases.

I want to thank the co-author of the bill, Representative Bernier, for reaching out to the WNA and developing a simple amendment to AB 694 and its assembly companion, SB 527 that reaffirms the important role public notices and [wisconsinpublicnotices.org](http://wisconsinpublicnotices.org) play in informing Wisconsites of unclaimed property, while also providing some relief for county treasurers.

This simple amendment would ensure that citizens would also know that unclaimed property listings can also be found online at [wisconsinpublicnotices.org](http://wisconsinpublicnotices.org)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today. As you further consider AB 694, I ask that you also adopt Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 694. I thank you for your time today, and consideration on this matter.