



May 3, 2018

The Honorable John Hickenlooper, Governor
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1792

Re: Support for the enactment of SB18-156

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

On behalf of the membership of Colorado Counties, Incorporated, we are writing to you today to urge the enactment of SB18-156, which would allow counties to publish financial information on a county website as opposed to having to pay to publish it in a legal newspaper, beginning in 2022.

Under an antiquated state law (passed in 1901), county governments have been required to publish a variety of financials (monthly warrants, employee salaries and semi-annual financial reports) in the local newspaper of reference for more than a century. Counties are the **only** governmental entities that are required to publish their financials in the newspaper. This statutory requirement does *not* apply to municipalities or schools or state government. **This unfunded mandate costs Colorado counties thousands of taxpayer dollars every year.**

SB18-156 would give counties the option (beginning in 2022) to publish their financial reports on a county website as an alternative to paying to publish in the local newspaper. There are still a handful of rural counties that prefer the newspaper publication method, and this bill will allow them to continue publishing in a paper if they desire.

It is widely acknowledged – and regrettable – that print journalism is in decline. According to a recent Pew Study, only 23% of Americans read a newspaper anymore. On the other hand, more than 80% of the households in Colorado have reliable high-speed Internet access – and that number will only increase with the recent enactment of SB18-002. Making this information available on the Internet is a far more effective way to communicate this financial reporting to a wider audience – at little to no cost for the county and the taxpayer.

It is also worth noting that counties are arguably the most transparent level of government already. Counties are required to file their budgets, audits and financial reports with the Department of Local Affairs each year, and under HB16-1230 they are required to file this same information with SIPA

for publication as well. Attached to this letter is a table showing which counties are currently posting their budgets and financial information on their county websites.

It is time to move into the information age at the local government level, just as the state and federal government have done – there should be no double standard based on the size or level of the government. Moreover, regardless of how any of us feel about the decline of print journalism, it is wrong for the taxpayers of Colorado to subsidize this industry.

This bill will remove an expensive unfunded mandate for local governments without compromising transparency and the public's right to know, and we respectfully ask that you sign this piece of legislation into law.

We thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Paul", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave Paul, President
Colorado Counties, Inc.

cc: The Honorable John Cooke, Colorado Senate
The Honorable Chris Kennedy, Colorado House of Representatives