



Arapahoe County

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Board Summary Report

File #: 25-379

Agenda Date: 7/7/2025

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office

Prepared By:

Nico Johnson, Management Analyst I, Commissioners' Office

Presenter: Ed Bowditch, Bowditch and Cassell Public Affairs; Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office; and Nico Johnson, Management Analyst I, Commissioners' Office

Subject:

2:15 PM *2025 Legislative Session Debrief and 2026 Look Ahead

Purpose and Request:

The purpose of this meeting is to review key points from the 2025 legislative session and the proposed direction for the remainder of the year. The Board will also consider what, if any, legislative items the Board wants to advance through the CCI process and if there are priorities that should be considered independent of CCI.

Background and Discussion: As a constitutional subdivision of Colorado state government, Arapahoe County can only exercise those powers specifically expressed in statute or in the constitution. Arapahoe County contracts with Bowditch and Cassell Public Affairs for state advocacy activities. The Director of the Commissioners' Office coordinates federal and state intergovernmental relations, in partnership with the County's legislative team, consisting of the Director of Human Services, the County Attorney, the Director of Community Resources, the Director of Public Works and Development, and the Director of Public Health.

On an annual basis, the Board of County Commissioners adopts legislative principles to guide federal and state advocacy work, evaluating policy positions through the lens of fiscal and operational impacts to Arapahoe County, consistent with its stated strategic plan and legal requirements. The Board also identified nine specific legislative items to focus on during the 2025 session, including:

- Ensure the transition of domestic violence cases from the City of Aurora to the 18th Judicial District is adequately resourced to effectively manage the increase in case load.
- Support the creation of a comprehensive, state-wide System of Care that serves children, youth, and young adults.
- Support the overhaul of the Colorado Benefits Management System to ensure benefits and resources are administered in a timely manner.
- Participate in the triennial review process to ensure retail food establishment fees are reflective of actual costs.
- Advance and refine access to funding programs that increase affordable housing and support programs for people experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure state and federal workforce funding is allocated to local workforce regions and not diverted to other workforce partners.

- Participate with local community correction programs to ensure state funding can adequately support alternative sentencing.
- Increase services and treatment placements for the highest acuity children in partnership with the General Assembly; the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health; and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.
- Promote the full funding of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) which have been negatively impacted by state and federal legislation.

Arapahoe County was actively engaged in legislation affecting the courts, general government, human services, and housing. Among the County's largest wins were successfully adding a footnote to the Long Bill that directs the state to evaluate the adequacy of the number of district and county judges relative to workload, and securing funding to cover the costs of managing the Retail Food Program.

During the 2025 legislative session, Arapahoe County tracked 44 of the 657 bills that were introduced, or just over 6%. The County adopted positions on 35 bills, a 40% decrease in positions taken during the 2024 session. Of the 23 bills the County either supported, opposed, or proposed amendments to, we saw a 57% success rate.

At this study session, our lobbyists from Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs and members of the legislative team will provide an overview of key points from the 2025 legislative session, review significant bills and outcomes, and discuss the County's legislative focus for the remainder of the year.

Additionally, the Board will consider if they would like to submit any of the attached legislative proposals to CCI for consideration. Each year CCI initiates six to eight member approved legislative priorities to address county needs that are shared around the state. Priorities should be realistic and closely related to the conduct of County Commissioners. Additionally, all proposals must have the support of the entire Board of County Commissioners.

If the county submits a proposal, CCI will rely heavily on the county to provide expertise and support throughout the Legislative Priority selection process, as well as during the 2026 legislative session. This can take many forms and could include presenting the proposal at CCI meetings, rallying support among fellow commissioners, drafting proposed statutory language, leading stake holding meetings, testifying, and considering feedback from opponents. Commissioners' Office staff coordinated with E-Team to collect potential legislative ideas. Proposed legislation must be submitted to CCI by Friday, July 18, 2025.

CCI will hold a virtual session to discuss legislative proposals on Friday, July 25, 2025. During this discussion, proponents of each issue will be asked to explain the proposal, field questions, and solicit input from their peers. During the study session, staff will provide context for the attached proposals, and Bowditch and Cassell Public Affairs and the County Attorney's Office will provide perspective on these issues.

Finally, staff will provide some general updates to the County's legislative principles for 2026. The Board will be asked to provide feedback on the proposed changes, so that staff can return at a later date with a more substantive draft for review.

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Alternatives: N/A

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ Be fiscally sustainable
- ☒ Provide essential and mandated service
- ☒ Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: N/A

Concurrence: N/A