

CSAC Guiding Principles for Compensation Transparency

Preamble

Widespread interest has been generated among policy leaders and the public regarding the disclosure of compensation provided to public officials and employees. While counties have long been required by statute and the constitution to publicly set salaries and to operate in a transparent manner, such interest has led to increased reporting and regulatory requirements from state agencies and the Legislature. The following guiding principles illustrate CSAC's commitment to ensuring public access to such compensation data without unnecessary additional administrative burdens on counties.

Guiding Principles

Avoid duplication

The SCO database should be the single source of required disclosure of public employee and elected official compensation data. Every county has complied with the requirement and it is likely that the reporting will soon become routine. Any county may choose to additionally make this information available on their website or to link to the SCO database, but additional mandates are unnecessary. The creation of additional forms by the Fair Political Practices Commission or the Secretary of State will only lead to redundancy and confusion. The Legislature could seek additional information or provide the SCO with explicit authority for the reporting program if there are perceived deficiencies with the existing program.

Keep requirements consistent with the Brown Act and Public Records Act

Timelines for providing information to the public via website, photocopy, or other means should be consistent with existing requirements in the Brown Act or Public Records Act. New standards should not be created.

Maintain simplicity

Any and all compensation disclosed should be streamlined and specific enough to allow apples to apples comparisons. It is important that any reporting requirement be clear enough to allow agencies of various sizes with various levels of staffing and software capabilities to be able to make consistent reports.

Apply to all levels of government

All compensation of public officials and employees, at every level of government, is public information. The SCO database should be expanded to include all public employees, including state and judicial branch employees.