



The California County Platform | Chapter 1

General Provisions

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

PREAMBLE

The strength and creativity of America's government institutions reflects the ability of a free people to create, control, and use their freedom for the purpose of self-government. The bedrock foundation of that strength and creativity is responsible and responsive local government. It is to local government – and particularly to county government – that citizens turn for day-to-day government needs. It is to the county that citizens turn for equal protection under the laws guaranteed by the state and federal constitutions and locally provided by the sheriff, courts, and jails. Citizens look to the county for the protection of health, the treatment of physical and mental illnesses and substance use disorders, and for help in times of financial crisis. Counties meet the needs of their diverse residents and employees, and promote equity in their communities, by designing programs and services in a way that satisfies current needs and takes into account historical factors to ensure fair administration. The county enhances economic well-being through its work in the fields of transportation, business regulation, planning, public safety, agricultural advice, libraries, and the protection and improvement of the built and natural environment.

Yet, decisions made by the California Legislature and electorate have restricted counties' ability to provide those services, and others, at the levels their communities desire. Beginning with its implementation of Proposition 13, the Legislature has entrusted counties, but not funded counties, to provide the most important services to Californians. Counties now face the twin pressures of increasing service demands and statutory requirements on the one hand, and the inability to raise necessary resources to meet those demands on the other.

Local control is the chief principle underlying the California County Platform (Platform). Based on that principle, the three major planks of the Platform are:

- 1) to allow county government the fiscal resources that enable it to meet its obligations;
- 2) to permit county government the flexibility to provide services and facilities in a manner that resolves the day-to-day problems communities face; and
- 3) to grant county government the ability to tailor the levels of local revenues and services to citizens' satisfaction.

This Platform is a statement of general principle and policy direction. It recognizes that when dealing in a fast-changing political arena in a state with many local differences, almost any policy guideline will occasionally require exceptions. Therefore, it is anticipated that both the CSAC Board of Directors and Executive Committee will support exceptions in appropriate situations upon finding that there exist compelling special conditions.

The Platform is incomplete in that it is continually subject to review and revision. The Platform chapters are arranged in a manner that facilitates additions and amendments without affecting remaining portions.

SECTION 1: LOCAL CONTROL

Local control calls for the recognition of the differences that exist throughout the state and holds that local government should have the flexibility to develop systems by which services are provided and problems are resolved. It calls on counties to resist externally imposed systems that ignore the differences among them.

Not only does local control fortify counties' position that the state must recognize local differences, it also allows for individual counties to adopt alternatives that might not be acceptable to other counties – provided that these alternatives are not imposed on those who do not wish them.

Counties adopt the principle of local control as the policy cornerstone of CSAC.

CSAC will strive to ensure that all legislative proposals, policies, and regulations recognize the differences that exist throughout the state. CSAC will strongly resist any externally imposed systems that ignore statewide differences or that erode local determination.

CSAC internally incorporates the principle of local control. In matters limited to county-wide or regional application, counties are free to determine their own solutions, except when the CSAC Board of Directors or the Executive Committee determines them to be of the gravest and most far-reaching proportions.

CSAC will firmly support any county or counties seeking to oppose the external imposition of systems upon them.

CSAC will firmly support any county or counties seeking to resolve local or regional issues through the enactment of legislation or otherwise, as long as the proposal is not contrary to the basic precepts of a strong and viable county government.

SECTION 2: INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

There are various issues and problems that transcend the boundaries of political subdivisions. In implementing the Platform, CSAC will endeavor to foster an understanding of the appropriate levels of governmental responsibility to promote efficient and effective governance for the citizens of the State of California. Within this context, it is essential that the roles of state, regional, and local agencies be recognized as distinct and separate. Areas of mutual concern do exist; however, the appropriate role of each agency varies.

Counties comprehensively plan for future growth, the management of natural resources, and the provision of public services; the state should only add requirements to this local planning in areas the Legislature explicitly finds to be of statewide concern. One useful measure of statewide significance is the Legislature's commitment of funds to local government for related costs.

Counties will fully implement state-mandated, state-funded programs locally. However, doing so is not financially or operationally feasible when state regulations are overly burdensome, internally inconsistent, too inflexible to local concerns, or generally underfunded. Therefore, CSAC supports a process of periodic legislative review to determine each mandated program's benefits, including the fiscal and operational feasibility of the program and related regulations.

Counties, cities, and special districts should adopt formal policies that encourage locally initiated solutions to regional problems.

CSAC will support reasonable proposals that encourage local agencies to resolve disputes without costly litigation and in a way that buoys public confidence in local government, for instance, through non-binding mediation.

SECTION 3: EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Counties also advocate the principle of local control to improve efficiency, economy, and effectiveness.

CSAC will consider proposals to realign responsibility for public services among levels of government. However, any realigned program responsibility must be accompanied by revenue authority sufficient to fund the ongoing costs of the program.

CSAC will support efforts to align program responsibility with revenue authority among various levels of government.

Many local services are well-suited for the utilization of private contracts. When properly used, private contracts can be an effective method of increasing efficiency and economy. CSAC encourages expanded permission to use private contracts to provide local services in justifiable areas as a means of achieving efficiency and economy.



The California County Platform | Chapter 2 Administration of Justice

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This chapter is intended to provide a policy framework to direct needed and inevitable change in our justice system without compromising our commitment to both public protection and the preservation of individual rights. CSAC supports and strives to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and equity within our California justice system.

The Role of Counties

The unit of local government that is responsible for the administration of the justice system must be close enough to the people to allow direct contact, but large enough to achieve economies of scale. While acknowledging that the state has a constitutional responsibility to enact laws and set standards, California counties are uniquely suited to continue to have major responsibilities in the administration of justice. However, the state must recognize differences arising from variations in population, geography, industry, and other demographics and permit responses to statewide problems to be tailored to the needs of individual counties.

CSAC believes that delegation of the responsibility to provide a justice system is meaningless without provision of adequate sources of funding.

SECTION 2: LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE MATTERS

Board of Supervisors Responsibilities

It is recognized that the state, and not the counties, is responsible for trial court operations costs and any growth in those costs in the future. Nevertheless, counties continue to be responsible for justice-related services, including, but not limited to, probation, prosecutorial and defense services, as well as the provision of local juvenile and adult detention facilities. Therefore, county boards of supervisors should have budget control over all executive and administrative elements of local justice programs for which we continue to have primary responsibility.

Law Enforcement Services

While continuing to provide the full range of police services, county sheriffs should move in the direction of providing less costly specialized services, which can most effectively be managed on a countywide basis. Cities should provide for patrol and emergency services within their limits or spheres of influence, as well as working collaboratively with sheriffs and counties, sharing the common goal of matching justice-involved individuals with appropriate rehabilitative treatment and support services where available. However, where deemed mutually beneficial to counties and cities, it may be appropriate to

establish contractual arrangements whereby a county would provide law enforcement services within incorporated areas. Counties should maintain maximum flexibility in their ability to contract with municipalities to provide public safety services.

District Attorney Services

The independent, locally elected nature of the district attorney must be protected. This office must have the capability and authority to review suspected violations of the law and bring its conclusions to the proper court.

Victim Indemnification

Government should be responsive to the needs of victims. Victim indemnification should be a state responsibility, and the state should adopt a program to facilitate receipt of available funds by victims, wherever possible, from the perpetrators of the crime who have a present or future ability to pay, through means that may include, but are not limited to, long-term liens of property and/or long-term payment schedules.

Witness Assistance

Witnesses should be encouraged to become more involved in the justice system by reporting crime, cooperating with law enforcement, and participating in the judicial process. A cooperative anonymous witness program funded jointly by local government and the state should be encouraged, where appropriate, in local areas.

Grand Juries

Every grand jury should continue to have the authority to report on the needs of county offices, but no such office should be investigated more than once in any two-year period, unless unusual circumstances exist. Grand juries should be authorized to investigate all local government agencies, not just counties. Local government agencies should have input into grand jury reports on non-criminal matters prior to public release. County officials should have the ability to call the grand jury foreman and their representative before the board of supervisors, for the purpose of gaining clarification on any matter contained in a final grand jury report. Counties and courts should work together to ensure that grand jurors are properly trained and that the jury is provided with an adequate facility within the resources of the county and the court.

Public Defense Services

Adequate legal representation must be provided for indigent persons as required by constitutional, statutory, and case law. Such representation includes both criminal and mental health conservatorship proceedings. The mechanism for meeting this responsibility should be left to the discretion of individual counties.

Counsel should be appointed for indigent juveniles involved in serious offenses and child dependency procedures. The court-appointed or -selected attorney in these procedures should be trained specifically to work with juveniles.

Adult defendants and parents of represented juveniles who have an ability to pay part of the costs of defense should continue to be required to do so as determined by the court. The state should increase its participation in sharing the costs of public defense services.

Should the Legislature require counties to collect and report data to the state regarding effective and equitable indigent defense, then the Legislature should provide sufficient funding for the staffing and resources necessary to do so. In the interests of justice, CSAC supports equitable funding opportunities between district attorneys and public defenders.

Coroner Services

The independent and investigative function of the coroner must be assured. State policy should encourage the application of competent pathological techniques in the determination of the cause of death.

The decision as to whether this responsibility is fulfilled by an independent coroner, sheriff-coroner combination, or a medical examiner should be left to the individual boards of supervisors. In rural counties, the use of contract medical examiners shall be encouraged on a case-by-case basis where local coroner judgment is likely to be challenged in court. A list of expert and highly qualified medical examiners, where available, should be circulated to local sheriff-coroners.

Pre-Sentence Detention

Adults

1) Facility Standards

The state's responsibility to adopt reasonable, humane, and constitutional standards for local detention facilities must be acknowledged.

Recognizing that adequate standards are dynamic and subject to constant review; local governments must be assured of an opportunity to participate in the development and modification of standards.

It must be recognized that the cost of upgrading detention facilities presents a nearly insurmountable financial burden to most counties. Consequently, enforcement of minimum standards must depend upon state financial assistance, and local costs can be further mitigated by shared architectural plans and design.

2) Pre-sentence Release

Counties' discretion to utilize the least restrictive alternatives to pre-sentence incarceration that are acceptable, in light of legal requirements and counties' responsibility to protect the public, should be unfettered.

3) Bail

CSAC supports a pre-trial and bail system that would validate the release of presentence persons using risk assessment tools as a criteria for release. Risk assessment tools and pre-trial release assessments should be designed to mitigate racial and economic disparities while maintaining public safety.

Any continuing county responsibility in the administration or operation of the bail system must include: 1) a state mechanism to finance the full costs of such a system at a level that does not require counties to supplement and 2) provide counties with adequate local flexibility.

Juveniles

1) General

CSAC views the juvenile justice system as being caught between changing societal attitudes calling for harsher treatment of serious offenders and its traditional orientation toward assistance and rehabilitation. CSAC must be involved in state-level discussions and decision-making processes regarding changes to the juvenile justice system that will have a local impact. There must also be recognition that changes do not take place overnight and that an incremental approach to change may be most appropriate.

We support a juvenile justice system that is adapted to local circumstances and increased state and federal funding support for local programs that are effective.

2) Facility Standards

The state's responsibility to adopt reasonable, humane, and constitutional standards for juvenile detention facilities is recognized. The adoption of any standards should include an opportunity for local government to participate. The state must recognize that local government requires financial assistance in order to modernize facilities and effectively implement state standards, particularly in light of the need for separating those who committed less serious offenses from those who committed more serious offenses.

CSAC supports the separation of juveniles into classes of sophistication. Separation should be based upon case-by-case determinations, taking into account age, maturity, need for secure custody, among other factors to keep juveniles and staff safe.

Due to the high cost of constructing separate juvenile hall facilities, emphasis should be placed on establishment of facilities and programs that allow for separation.

3) Treatment and Rehabilitation

As with the adult system, counties should have broad discretion in developing programs for juveniles, but with a focus on treatment, rehabilitation, and reentry.

To reduce overcrowding of juvenile institutions and to improve the chances for treatment and rehabilitation of those who commit more serious offenses, it is necessary that individuals with lower-level offenses are diverted from the formal juvenile justice system to their families and appropriate community-based programs. Each juvenile should receive individual consideration and, where feasible, a risk assessment.

Counties should pursue efficiency measures that enable better use of resources and should pursue additional funding from federal, state, and private sources to establish appropriate programs at the county level.

Prevention and diversion programs should be developed by each county or regionally to meet the local needs and circumstances, which vary greatly among urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state. Programs should be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis for their effectiveness to ensure their ability to protect public safety and to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.

4) Bail

Unless transferred to adult court, juveniles should not be entitled to bail. Release on their own recognizance should be held pending the outcome of the proceedings.

5) Removal of Juveniles to Adult Court

To the greatest extent possible, determinations regarding the fitness of juveniles who have committed serious offenses should be made by the juvenile court on a case-by-case basis.

6) Jury Trial for Juveniles

Except when transferred to adult court, juveniles should not be afforded the right to a jury trial — even when charged with a serious offense.

General Principles for Local Corrections

Definition

Local corrections include maximum, medium and minimum-security incarceration, work furlough programs, home detention, county parole, probation, Post Release Community Supervision (PRCS) and community-based programs for convicted persons.

Purpose

CSAC believes that swift and certain arrest, conviction, and punishment is important to meet immediate public safety needs. However, we also believe that appropriate, individualized treatment and

rehabilitative programming are also key to the prevention of crime and reduction of recidivism. Pragmatic experience justifies the continuation of rehabilitative programs for those convicted persons whom a court determines must be incarcerated and/or placed on local supervision.

In light of the state's recent efforts on corrections reform — primarily on recidivism and overcrowding in state detention facilities, counties feel it is essential to articulate their values and objectives as vital participants in the overall corrections continuum. Further, counties understand that they must be active participants in any successful effort to improve the corrections system in our state. Given that local and state corrections systems are interconnected, true reform must consider the advantage — if not necessity — of investing in local programs and services to help the state reduce the rate of growth in the prison population. Emphasizing front-end investment in local programs and initiatives, will yield greater long-term economic and social dividends that benefit communities across the state.

An optimum corrections strategy must feature a strong and committed partnership between the state and local governments. State and local authorities must focus on pro-social behavior and productive use of time while individuals are in custody or under state or local supervision. A shared commitment to rehabilitation can help address the inextricably linked challenges of recidivism and facility overcrowding. The most effective method of rehabilitation is one that maintains ties to the community.

Programs and services must be adequately funded to enable counties to accomplish their functions in the corrections system and to ensure successful outcomes. To the extent that new programs or services are contemplated, or proposed for realignment, support must be in the form of a dedicated, new and sustained funding source specific to the program and/or service rather than a redirection of existing resources, and adequate to achieve specific outcomes. In addition, any realignment must be examined in relation to how it affects the entire corrections continuum and in context of sound, evidence-based practices. Any proposed realignment of programs and responsibility from the state to counties must be guided by CSAC's existing Realignment Principles.

System and process changes must recognize that the 58 California counties have unique characteristics, differing capacities, and constituents with varying views on public safety and our criminal justice system. Programs should reflect this diversity and be designed to promote innovation at the local level and to permit maximum flexibility, so that services can best target individual community needs and capacities. Data collection and data sharing are critical components as counties implement new criminal justice efforts.

Equal Treatment

Policies that reinforce equitable conditions, treatment, resources, and opportunities are strongly supported. State policy must uphold individuals' right to privacy and acknowledge the programmatic needs of those in custody.

Community-Based Programs

The most cost-effective method of rehabilitating convicted persons is the least restrictive alternative that is close to the individual's community and should be encouraged where possible.

State policy must recognize that correctional programs must always be balanced with the need for public safety and that community-based programs are only successful to the extent that they are sufficiently funded.

Relationship to Human Services Systems

State policy toward corrections should reflect a holistic philosophy, which recognizes that persons entering the correctional system should be provided welfare, medical, mental health, vocational, and educational services. Efforts to rehabilitate persons entering the correctional system should involve these services, based on the needs — and, when possible, a risk assessment — of the individual.

Relationship to Mental Health System: Mental Health Diversion Programs

Adequate mental health services can reduce criminal justice costs and utilization. Appropriate diagnosis and treatment services, as well as increased use of diversion programs, will result in positive outcomes for individuals with a mental illness and ultimately, the public. Counties continue to work across disciplines to achieve positive outcomes for persons with mental health and/or co-occurring substance use disorder (SUD) issues.

Medical Services

CSAC supports efforts at the federal level to permit local governments to access third-party payments for health care provided in detention facilities. CSAC also supports efforts to ensure continuity of benefits for those detained in county detention facilities – adult and juvenile – and for swift reenrollment in the appropriate benefits program pre-release. With the implementation of the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal Justice-Involved initiative (CalAIM JI) – which authorizes counties to provide a specific set of services to Medi-Cal eligible youth and adults 90 days prior to their release – the state should consider the ongoing impacts to counties with regards to staffing, system infrastructure, treatment capacity, and the sustainability of programming and services beyond the initial implementation phase. All qualifying prerelease services, coordinated community reentry processes, and Medi-Cal billing requirements under the CalAIM JI cannot be seamlessly integrated with existing systems and supported by current staffing and resources. Long term funding should be a state and federal priority for successful implementation, which has the ability to reduce the risks of poor health outcomes and incarceration due to mental health issues and SUD.

Investment in Local Programs and Facilities

The state's investment in local programs and facilities returns an overall benefit to the state corrections system and community safety. State support of local programs and facilities will aid materially in addressing the "revolving door" problem in state and local detention facilities.

The state should invest in improving, expanding, and renovating local detention facilities to address overcrowding, early releases, and improved delivery of health care for incarcerated persons. Incentives should be included to encourage in-custody treatment programs and other services.

The state should invest in adult probation services — using as a potential model the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) — to build a continuum of intervention, prevention, and supervision services for adults.

The state should continue to fully support the successful JJCPA initiative, which provides a range of juvenile crime prevention and intervention programs, and represents a critical component of an overall crime reduction and public safety improvement strategy. Diverting juveniles will help reduce pressure on the adult system.

The state should invest in mental health and SUD in-custody treatment and jail diversion programs, where treatment and services can help promote long-term stability and co-occurring mental health and SUD treatment services can be deployed.

This includes but is not limited to further investment in outpatient treatment facilities, given that many incarcerated persons in state and local systems struggle with co-occurring disorders, which may be a primary factor in their criminality.

Reentry Programs

Reentry programs represent a promising means for preventing recidivism by providing a continuum of care that facilitates pre-sentence assessment, prevention, and transition of persons back into the community through appropriate treatment, life skills training, job placement, and other services and supports. Given the short length of stay for many held in county jail, a robust continuum of care should begin with reentry planning, assessment, and connection to services upon booking. The state should consider further investment in multiagency programs authorized under SB 618¹, which are built on proven, evidence-based strategies including comprehensive pre-sentence assessments, in-custody treatment, targeted case management, and the development of an individualized life plan. These programs promote a permanent shift in the way individuals who have committed nonviolent felonies are managed, treated and released into their respective communities. Examples of program elements that have been demonstrated to improve chances for successful community reintegration include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Early risks and needs assessment that incorporates assessments of the need for treatment of alcohol and SUD, and the degree of need for literacy, vocational, and mental health services;
- 2) In-custody treatment that is appropriate to each individual's needs — no one-size-fits-all programming;

¹ Chapter 603, Statutes of 2005.

- 3) After care and relapse prevention services to maintain a “clean and sober” lifestyle;
- 4) Strong linkages to treatment, vocational training, and support services in the community;
- 5) Prearranged housing and employment (or vocational training) for offenders before release into their communities of residence;
- 6) Completion of a reentry plan prior to the offenders’ transition back into the community that addresses the following, but is not limited to: an offender’s housing, employment, medical, dental, and rehabilitative service needs;
- 7) Preparation of the community and families to support reintegration by utilizing available counseling services and public education, which targets inter-generational impacts and cycles of criminal justice system involvement;
- 8) Long-term mentorship and support from faith-based and other community and cultural support organizations that will last a lifetime, not just the duration of the parole period;
- 9) Community-based treatment options and sanctions; and
- 10) Reentry programs that include incentives for participation.

Siting of New Facilities

Counties acknowledge that placement of correctional facilities is controversial. However, the state must be sensitive to community response to changing the use of, expanding, or siting new correctional facilities (prisons, community correctional facilities, ~~juvenile facilities~~ or reentry facilities). Counties and other affected municipalities must be involved as active participants in planning and decision-making processes regarding site selection. Providing for security and appropriate mitigations to the local community are essential.

Impact on Local Treatment Capacity

Counties and the state must be aware of the impact on local communities’ existing treatment capacity (e.g., mental health, SUD treatment, vocational services, sex offender treatment, indigent healthcare, developmental services, and services for special needs populations) if correctional reforms contemplate a new and significant demand on services as part of the development of community correctional facilities, reentry programs, or other locally based programs. Specialized treatment services that are not widely available are likely the first to be overtaxed. To prevent adverse impacts upon existing alcohol and SUD and mental health treatment programs for primarily non-criminal justice system participants, treatment capacity shall be increased to accommodate criminal justice participants. Treatment capacity

is determined by facility space, existing workforce or expansion of the workforce, as well as funding for slots.

Impact on Local Criminal Justice Systems

Proposals must adequately assess the impact on local criminal justice systems (courts, prosecution and defense, probation, detention systems and local law enforcement).

Emerging and Best Practices

Counties support the development and implementation of a mechanism for collecting and sharing of best practices and data that can help advance correctional reform efforts.

Adult Correctional Institutions

Counties should continue to administer adult correctional institutions for those whose conviction(s) require and/or results in local incarceration.

The state and counties should establish a collaborative planning process to review the relationship between local and state corrections programs.

Counties should continue to have flexibility to build and operate facilities that meet local needs. Specific methods of administering facilities and programs should not be mandated by statute.

Adult Probation

Counties should continue to provide adult probation services as a cost-effective alternative to post-sentence incarceration and to provide services—as determined appropriate—to persons released from local correctional facilities. Counties should be given flexibility to allocate resources at the local level according to the specific needs of their probation population and consideration should be granted to programs that allow such discretion. State programs that provide fiscal incentives to counties for keeping convicted persons out of state institutions should – on balance – result in system improvements. State funding should be based upon a state-county partnership effort that seeks to protect the public and to address the needs of individuals who come into contact with the justice system. Such a partnership would acknowledge that final decisions on commitments to state institutions are made by the courts, a separate branch of government, and are beyond the control of counties. Some integration of county probation and state parole services should be considered. Utilization of electronic monitoring for individuals on probation and parole should be considered when cost-effective and necessary to uphold public safety.

General Principles for Juvenile Corrections

CSAC believes that efforts to curtail anti-social, harm inducing behavior of young people are of the highest priority within juvenile corrections. The long-term costs resulting from such behavior justifies extraordinary efforts to rehabilitate them.

Counties should be given flexibility to allocate resources at the local level according to the specific needs of the juvenile population and consideration should be granted to programs that allow such discretion. State programs that provide fiscal incentives to counties for keeping convicted persons out of state institutions should – on balance – result in system improvements. Any program should recognize that final decisions on commitments to state institutions are made by the courts, a separate branch of government, and are beyond the control of counties.

Division of Juvenile Justice Realignment

Counties are now responsible for the full juvenile justice continuum. To carry out this responsibility, counties believe it is necessary for the state to provide adequate and sustainable funding; local flexibility to develop responses and partnerships between counties to adequately serve youth, especially those with higher-level treatment needs; and appropriate oversight and accountability that is commensurate to the responsibility and liability realigned. Additionally, oversight and accountability measures associated with the most complex youth cases that were last to be realigned should not disrupt the success counties have proven with existing juvenile programs and funding streams.

Funding should recognize the unique position, needs, and conditions of each county, as well as their juvenile facilities, and include a growth factor so that future funding keeps pace with growing programmatic costs. To the extent the state does not provide adequate funding for counties to be successful with the realigned population, responsibility for the care and custody of the most complex juvenile cases should return to the state.

Counties support evidence-based efforts to protect against unnecessary transfers of juveniles to the adult system. However, these efforts should not reduce local flexibility or create unfunded costs for counties to build new, or retrofit existing, facilities.

Juvenile Probation

Counties should continue to provide juvenile probation services as a cost-effective alternative to post-adjudication and to provide juvenile probation services to individual youths and their families after the youth's release from a local correctional facility.

Truants, run-a-ways, and youths who are beyond the control of their parents should continue to be removed from the justice system except in unusual circumstances.

Gang Violence Prevention

Counties recognize the devastating societal impacts of gang violence – not only on the victims of gang-related crimes, but also on the lives of gang members and their families. Counties are committed to working with allied agencies, municipalities, and community-based organizations to prevent gang violence and promote healthy and safe communities. These efforts require the support of federal and state governments and should employ regional strategies and partnerships, where appropriate.

Human Services System Referral of Juveniles

State policies should seek to prevent and minimize human services system referrals to the juvenile justice system. As counties are responsible for the entirety of the juvenile justice population, these decisions should be left to counties based on individual case factors, local needs and available treatment and resources. Given the growing research on the cognitive development of youth and their decision making, juvenile placement decisions – as well as child welfare decisions – should reflect the focus on individualized care and treatment and preventing youth from entering the justice system.

Federal Criminal Justice Assistance

The federal government should continue to provide funding for projects that improve the operation and efficiency of the justice system and that improve the quality and equitable administration of justice. Such programs should provide for maximum local discretion in designing programs that are consistent with local needs and objectives.

SECTION 3: SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

For the safety and well-being of California's citizens, especially those most vulnerable to sexual assault, it is essential for counties and the state to manage known sex offenders living in our communities in ways that most effectively reduce the likelihood that they will commit another offense, whether such reoffending occurs while they are under the formal supervision of the criminal justice system or after supervision comes to an end.

In light of this, counties seek to develop strategies to: 1) educate county residents, 2) effectively manage the sex offender population, which may or may not coincide with existing state policy, 3) assess which sex offenders are at the highest risk to re-offend and require increased monitoring, and 4) partner with other state and local organizations that assist with prevention and supervision.

To that end, CSAC has adopted the following principles and policy on sex offender management.

Any effective sex offender management policy should contain restriction clauses that do not focus on where a sex offender lives, but rather on movement and behavior. Counties believe activities and whereabouts pose a greater danger than their residence. Therefore, any strategy should consider the specific offense/s committed and prohibit travel to areas that may pose heightened risk.

When taking actions to address and/or improve sex offender management, each county should do so in a manner that does not create difficulties for other counties to manage the sex offender population within their jurisdiction.

At minimum, any comprehensive sex offender management program must contain a community education component for it to be successful. And, all supervision programs administered at the local

level will require stable and adequate funding from the state to ensure that the programs are appropriately staffed, accessible to local law enforcement departments, and effective.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) devices are one of a multitude of tools that can be used simultaneously to monitor and supervise. California counties believe that if the state is to adopt the use of GPS to monitor sex offenders a common system should be developed. This system should be portable and accessible across all counties within California and regional collaboration should be encouraged to improve sex offender management.

Counties and the state should rely more heavily on the use of risk and needs assessments to determine how to allocate resources. These assessments will allow an agency at the local level to determine who is most at risk of reoffending and in need of monitoring.

Counties believe that for any policy to work, local governments and the state must work collaboratively. The passage of Jessica's Law (Proposition 83, November 2006) intensified discussions regarding sex offender management and the public's perception about effective sex offender management policies. Accordingly, state and local governments should continually reexamine sex offender management policies.

SECTION 4: JUDICIAL BRANCH MATTERS

Trial Court Management

The recognized need for greater uniformity and efficiency in the trial courts must be balanced against the need for a court system that is responsive and adaptable to unique local circumstances. Any statewide administrative structure must provide a mechanism for consideration of local needs.

Trial Court Structure

CSAC supports a unified consolidated trial court system of general jurisdiction that maintains the accessibility provided by existing trial courts. The state shall continue to accept financial responsibility for any increased costs resulting from a unified system.

Trial Court Financing

Sole responsibility for the costs of trial court operations should reside with the state, not the counties. Nevertheless, counties continue to bear the fiscal responsibility for several local judicial services that are driven by state policy decisions over which counties have little or no control. We strongly believe that it is appropriate for the state to assume greater fiscal responsibility for other justice services related to trial courts, including collaborative courts. Further, we urge that the definition of court operations financed by the state should include the district attorney, the public defender, court appointed counsel, and probation.

Trial Court Facilities

The court facility transfers process that concluded in 2009 places responsibility for trial court facility maintenance, construction, planning, design, rehabilitation, replacement, leasing, and acquisition squarely with the state judicial branch. Counties remain committed to working in partnership with the courts to fulfill the terms of the transfer agreements and to address transitional issues as they arise.

Court Services

Although court operation services are the responsibility of the state, certain county services provided by probation and sheriff departments are directly supportive of the trial courts. Bail and own recognizance investigations, as well as pre-sentence reports, should be provided by probation, sheriff, and other county departments to avoid duplication of functions, but their costs should be recognized as part of the cost of operating trial courts.

Jurors and Juries

Counties should be encouraged to support programs that maximize use of potential jurors and minimize unproductive waiting time. These programs can reduce costs, while encouraging citizens to serve as jurors. These efforts must consider local needs and circumstances. To further promote efficiency, counties support the use of fewer than twelve person juries in civil cases.

Collaborative Courts

Counties support collaborative courts that address the needs and unique circumstances of specified populations, such as persons experiencing mental health concerns, SUD, the unsheltered, and veterans. Given that the provision of county services is vital to the success of collaborative courts, these initiatives must be developed locally and collaboratively with the joint commitment of the court and county. This decision-making process must include advance identification of county resources – including, but not limited to, mental health treatment and alcohol and SUD treatment programs and services, prosecution, defense, and probation services – available to support the collaborative court in achieving its objectives.

Court and County Collection Efforts

Improving the collection of court-ordered debt is a shared commitment of counties and courts. An appropriately unyielding and successful collection effort yields important benefits for both courts and county services. Counties support local determination of both the governance and operational structure of the court-ordered debt collection program and remain committed to jointly pursuing with the courts strategies and options to maximize recovery of court-ordered debt.

SECTION 5: VIOLENCE PREVENTION

CSAC remains committed to raising awareness of the toll of violence – in particular, family violence and cases of ongoing control and abuses of power, hate crimes, and violence against women, children, the elderly, and other marginalized groups – on families and communities by supporting efforts that target violence prevention, reporting, investigation, intervention, and treatment. Specific strategies for prevention and early intervention should be developed through cooperation between state and local

governments, as well as community, and private organizations, taking into account that violence adversely impacts all Californians, particularly those in disadvantaged communities, at disproportionate rates and that these impacts have long-term and wide-ranging health and economic consequences. CSAC also supports efforts to build safe communities, use data-informed approaches, pursue trauma-informed care, and work with key partners to implement violence prevention strategies.

Since counties have specific responsibilities in certifying intimate partner batterer intervention programs, it is in the best interest of the state and counties that these programs provide treatment that addresses the criminogenic needs of individuals and looks at evidence-based or promising practices as the most effective standard for certifying batterer intervention programs.

SECTION 6: HOMELESSNESS

Given the growing magnitude of California’s homelessness crisis, CSAC reinstated the Homelessness Action Team in 2022 to develop guiding principles on homelessness. These *Homelessness Principles* were approved by the CSAC Board of Directors on September 1, 2022, were utilized to develop the AT HOME Plan that was released in March 2023, and will guide advocacy efforts around homelessness policies, investments, and proposals. The principles outline the need for a statewide plan, call for multi-level partnerships and collaboration, while recognizing the need for clear lines of responsibility across all levels of government, detail the importance of building enough housing, and highlight how critical sustained and flexible state funding is to making progress.

SECTION 7: GOVERNMENT LIABILITY

The current government liability system is out of balance. It functions almost exclusively as a source of compensation for injured parties. Other objectives of this system, such as the deterrence of wrongful conduct and protection of governmental decision-making, have been largely ignored. Moreover, as a compensatory system of ever-increasing proportions, it is unplanned, unpredictable and fiscally unsound – both for the legitimate claimant and for the taxpayers who fund public agencies.

Among the principal causes of these problems is the philosophy – expressed in statutes and decisions narrowing governmental immunities under the Tort Claims Act – that private loss should be shifted to society where possible on the basis of shared risk, irrespective of fault or responsibility in the traditional tort law sense.

The expansion of government liability over recent years has had the salutary effect of forcing public agencies to evaluate their activities in terms of risk and to adopt risk management practices. However, liability consciousness is eroding the independent judgment of public decision-makers. In many instances, mandated services are being performed at lower levels and non-mandated services are being reduced or eliminated altogether. Increasingly, funds and efforts are being diverted from programs serving the public to the insurance and legal judicial systems.

Until recently, there appeared to be no end to expansion of government liability costs. Now, however, the "deep pocket" has been cut off. Insurance is either unavailable or cost prohibitive and tax revenues are severely limited. Moreover, restricted revenue authority not only curtails the ability of public entities to pay, but also increases exposure to liability by reducing funding for maintenance and repair programs. As a result, public entities and ultimately, the Legislature, face difficult fiscal decisions when trying to balance between the provision of governmental service and the continued expansion of government liability.

There is a need for data on the actual cost impacts of government tort liability. As a result of previous CSAC efforts, insurance costs for counties are fairly well documented. However, more information is needed about the cost of settlement awards, and about the very heavy "transactional costs" of administering and defending claims. We also need more information about the programmatic decisions being forced upon public entities, for example, what activities are dropped because of high liability. CSAC and its member counties must attempt to fill this information gap.

CSAC should advocate for the establishment of reasonable limits upon government liability and the balancing of compensatory function of the present system with the public interests in efficient, fiscally sound government. This does not imply a return to "sovereign immunity" concepts or a general turning away of injured parties. It simply recognizes, as did the original Tort Claims Act, that: (1) government should not be more liable than private parties, and (2) that in some cases there is reason for government to be less liable than private parties. It must be remembered that government exists to provide essential services to people and most of these services could not be provided otherwise. A private party faced with risks that are inherent in many government services would drop the activity and take up another line of work. Government does not have that option.

In attempting to limit government liability, CSAC's efforts should bring governmental liability into balance with the degree of fault and need for governmental service.

In advocating an "era of limits" in government liability, CSAC should take the view of the taxpayer rather than that of counties per se. At all governmental levels, it is the taxpayer who carries the real burden of government liability and has most at stake in bringing the present system into better balance. In this regard, it should be remembered that the insurance industry is not a shield, real or imagined, between the claimant and the taxpayer.



The California County Platform | Chapter 3 Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors November 2024

INTRODUCTION

Counties recognize the necessity of balancing the need to develop and utilize resources for the support of our society with the need to protect and preserve the environment. Counties also recognize that climate change and the release of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere have the potential to dramatically impact our environment, public health and economy. Due to the overarching nature of the climate change issues, all sections in this chapter should be viewed in conjunction with Chapter Fourteen – Climate Change.

Counties assert that solutions necessary to achieve this delicate balance can best be formulated at the local level in cooperation with public and private industry as well as state and federal government.

Processes must be adopted for all proposed state and federal rules and regulations to include a detailed environmental and economic cost/benefit analysis. Additionally, proposed and existing state rules and regulations that exceed federal standards should be evaluated and justified.

SECTION 1: AGRICULTURE

Counties recognize the importance of agriculture and its contribution to the state's economy. If California is to continue as the leading agriculture state in the nation, the remaining viable agricultural lands must be protected. In order to ensure that agricultural land protection is a statewide priority, the state, in cooperation with local governments, must implement policies which accomplish the following:

- Provide innovative incentives that will encourage agricultural water conservation and retention of lands in agricultural production;
- Promote agricultural economic development activities, including but not limited to agritourism, local food processing facilities, and the implementation of new technologies.
- Support allocation of transportation resources to the improvement of critical goods movement corridors and farm-to-market routes.
- Encourage the development of new water resources, storage, and delivery systems.
- Provide research and development for biological control and integrated pest management

practices.

- Ensure water and air quality standards are retained at a level that enables agricultural production to continue without significant lessening in the quantity or quality of production.
- Support the continuation of statewide public education curricula that address the essential role that agriculture plays in California and world economics.
- Promote California agriculture, protect it from pests and diseases and ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food and other agricultural products for the consumer.
- Foster a decision-making environment based upon input from all interested parties and analysis of the best available information, science and technology.
- Continue to build consumer and business confidence in the marketplace through inspection and testing of all commercial weighing and measuring devices.
- Encourage low impact/sustainable agricultural practices.
- Support the elimination of inheritance taxes on agricultural lands.
- Support full funding for, and protect investments in, the UC Cooperative Extension given its vital role in delivering research-based information and educational programs that enhance economic vitality and the quality of life in California counties, especially for rural and economically disadvantaged communities.
- Support funding programs for diversified climate smart adaptation to agricultural operation infrastructure including, but not limited to, solar, water collection, storage, and organic and regenerative agriculture practices.

Working with other Entities

The University of California's Cooperative Extension Service, County Agriculture Commissioners, Sealers of Weights and Measures, Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), local farm bureaus, Coordinated Resource Management Planning committees (CRMPs), and Resource Conservation & Development Councils (RC&Ds) are valuable resources that can be relied upon to assist state and local governments with the implementation of the policy directives noted above, as well as other programs supporting agricultural and natural resources. Given the long-standing relationship between local Cooperative Extension offices, county agricultural departments (i.e. County Farm Advisors and Agricultural Commissioners), RCDs, local farm bureaus, CRMPs, RC&Ds and individual counties, it is imperative that state and county officials develop ongoing support for these programs. Further, state and county officials are encouraged to remind other policy and decision makers of the importance of these entities and their value to agriculture, natural resources, the environment and community development.

Williamson Act

Counties support revisions to the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, that provide property owners greater incentives to continue participation under the Act. Additionally, counties are committed to support other reasonable legislative changes which preserve the integrity of the Williamson Act and eliminate abuses resulting in unjustified and premature conversions of contracted land for development.

Counties support the restoration of Williamson Act subventions. The state subventions to counties also must be revised to recognize all local tax losses.

State and County Fairs

Whether state-owned/operated or county-owned, fairs are important assets to California's counties. They provide educational and competitive exhibits that highlight state and local industrial enterprises, resources and products. Fairs also provide the venue for a variety of agricultural and local community events and serve the state by assisting in emergency preparedness and response. Fairgrounds are critical facilities during local and statewide emergencies, including during wildfires, as evacuation centers and staging areas for emergency operations. The state and the Governor's administration are encouraged to provide timely appointees for Fair Boards.

For these reasons, counties believe it is important these facilities be modernized and well-maintained to be sustainably run. The state is encouraged to assess the condition of these state facilities, some of which are in poor and unsafe condition, and take action to bring facilities into good repair. The state is also encouraged to identify whether existing fairgrounds meet the needs of local Agricultural Districts or if investments in new facilities would better serve the aforementioned purposes.

Counties recognize that fairs represent a critical state and community asset that is in dire need of funding and strongly support the development of a comprehensive solution that will ensure the viability of the entire fair network.

SECTION 2: FORESTS

Counties recognize the importance of forests to the state's economy. California is one of the top timber producing states in the nation and, to remain so, the state must protect and maintain its viable timberland base. Counties also recognize the importance of forestry in the context of climate change.

Effectively managed forests are critical to meeting state goals for climate change, climate resiliency, and GHG emissions. Just as importantly, overloaded forest fuels threaten rural communities, forest species, and natural ecosystems by abetting unprecedented catastrophic wildfires.

Good forest management practices not only protect local communities, economic assets, ecosystems, and outdoor recreation, but also reduces the release of harmful greenhouse gases. This is especially true as the state experiences more extreme wildfire seasons, as a single year of megafires can release as much carbon emission tonnage as 16 years of state emissions reductions. To meet state climate goals, and ensure protection of the viable timberland base, it must become a statewide priority to implement existing policies or adopt new policies that accomplish the following:

- Support the prioritization of vegetation management on federal and state public lands adjacent or in proximity to high-population areas.
- Support efforts for sustainable funding for the ongoing maintenance of vegetation management efforts for wildfire fuel breaks and federal and state public lands.
- Continue reimbursement to counties for lost timber related revenues as currently provided under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.
- Encourage sustainable forestry practices through the existing regulatory process and in collaboration with indigenous populations and tribal governments.
- Encourage continued reforestation on private timberlands.
- Provide new and innovative incentives that will encourage good management practices, such as prescribed burns, and timberland retention.
- Support the State Fire Safe Council's mission to preserve California's natural and man-made resources by mobilizing all Californians to make their homes, neighborhoods, and communities fire safe.
- Support for state and federal resources to address the tree mortality crisis in California.
- Support the continuing work of the Governor's Forest Management Task Force.
- Oppose any net increase in state or federal land acquisition, unless otherwise supported by the affected local governments, and until all the issues and concerns of local jurisdictions are addressed or mitigated to their satisfaction.
- Support the state's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action plan and better managements of state forest resources.

Biomass

Counties recognize the problems and opportunities presented by biomass and accumulated fuels reduction efforts. However, counties view biomass as a critical technology for utilizing and removing nonsalable slash and forest fuels and potentially an important technology to help

meeting state clean energy goals. The state of California must develop a coherent, integrated biomass policy that will guide forward-thinking regulation and help create a viable industry. The state must give highest priority in the near term to the retention of its unique biomass energy industry, which is in danger of disappearing as the result of electric services restructuring and changes in energy markets. By integrating state and local air quality goals, wildfire prevention and waste management strategies into a statewide biomass policy, California will solve several critical environmental problems and create viable private industries, which will serve the public need.

SECTION 3: MINERAL RESOURCES

The extraction of minerals is essential to the needs and continued economic well-being of society. To ensure the viability of this important industry and to protect the environment, existing and new statewide policies concerning mineral resources must accomplish the following:

- Encourage conservation and responsible production of known or potential mineral deposits for the economic health and well-being of society.
- Ensure the rehabilitation of mined lands to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and protect public health and safety.
- Recognize that the reclamation of mined lands will allow continued mining of minerals and will provide for the protection and subsequent beneficial use of the mined and reclaimed land.
- Recognize that surface mining takes place in diverse areas where the geologic, topographic, climatic, biological, and social conditions are significantly different and that reclamation operations and the specifications thereof may vary accordingly.
- Oversee surface, pit, in-stream, and off-site mining operations to prevent or minimize adverse environmental effects.
- Specify that determination of entitlements to surface mining operations is a local land use issue, provided that reclamation plans are obtained and enforced.
- Encourage state support in reforming local and federal claim systems to ensure information sharing between governments and prevent fraudulent claim sales.

SECTION 4: AIR QUALITY

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 8: Air Quality within the Climate Change Chapter of the County Platform.

Counties fully recognize that clean air laws have been enacted to protect the public from the adverse and deleterious health effects of air pollution. However, any rules and regulations aimed at improving California's air quality must be developed with the input of local government. Rule makers working on air quality issues must ensure a balance between economic advancement, health effects and environmental impacts.

Counties assert that federal and state agencies, in cooperation with local agencies, have the ability to develop rules and regulations that implement clean air laws that are both cost-effective and operationally feasible. In addition, state and federal agencies should be encouraged to accept equivalent air quality programs, thereby allowing for flexibility in implementation without compromising air quality goals.

As it pertains to air quality regulations, distinctions need to be drawn between different types of open burning (i.e. wildland fuel reduction programs using prescribed fire v. agricultural burning). Efforts should continue to find economical alternatives to open burning in general.

Failure to meet air quality standards may jeopardize federal transportation funding statewide. Counties continue to work closely with congestion management agencies, air quality districts, metropolitan organizations and regional transportation agencies to ensure that transportation planning is coordinated with air quality objectives.

Many portions of the state, including the broader Sacramento area and mountain counties air basin, have been formally identified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) as receptors of ozone-related air pollution transported from the San Francisco Bay Area and the San Joaquin Valley. Although the California Air Resources Board is considering actions that will help mitigate air pollution transport, the receptor counties are still potentially subject to sanctions if they do not take sufficient steps to achieve and maintain healthy air quality. Sanctions can take many forms, including lowered New Source Review thresholds in the receptor districts as compared to transporting districts and through transportation conformity. Given the potential impacts on the receptor counties, legislation and/or policy measures must be enacted that provide reasonable sanction protection for counties impacted by air pollution transport from upwind areas. Other legislative or policy measures that would require the upwind areas to implement air pollution mitigation measures should also be considered.

Given its longstanding support of local autonomy, CSAC opposes the addition of state appointees to local air districts. Such an action would result in a loss of local control without perceived improvements to the public process and clean air efforts. However, technical support services at the state level such as research, data processing and specialized staff support should be maintained and expanded to assist local air quality management efforts.

SECTION 5: WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Water Resources Development

Counties recognize the complexities of water use and distribution throughout the state, and therefore should be officially represented geographically on all federal, state, and regional water policy bodies and decision-making authorities. A comprehensive statewide water resource management plan – one that includes the upper watershed areas – is essential to the future of California. Such a plan should include a full assessment of needs for all users.

Counties support statutory protection of counties of origin and watershed areas. These protections provide that only water that is surplus to the reasonable ultimate human and natural system needs of the area of origin should be made available for beneficial uses in other areas. A natural system includes the ecosystem, meaning a recognizable, relatively homogeneous unit that includes organisms, their environment, and all interactions among them. Additionally, the cost of water development to users within the areas of origin should not be increased by affecting a water export plan. In all federal and state legislation, county of origin protections should be reaffirmed, and related feasibility studies should clearly identify and quantify all reasonable future needs of the counties of origin to permit the inclusion of specific guarantees. Existing water rights should be recognized and protected.

Counties must be compensated for any third-party impacts, including, but not limited to, curtailed tax revenues and increases in costs of local services occasioned by an export project.

The state must develop new solutions to expand water resources to meet the needs of residents, agricultural production, and industrial development, while balancing the protection of precious aquatic and riverine species. Projects should be considered that will create new water supplies through a variety of means such as recycling, water neutral developments, storm water capture, desalinization, waste water reclamation, watershed management, development of additional surface and groundwater storage, conveyance, and conservation. In building any new water projects, the state must take into account and mitigate any negative socio-economic impacts on the affected counties.

Counties support the incorporation of appropriate recreational facilities into all water conservation and development projects to the extent feasible.

Water Rationing

One-size-fits-all statewide water rationing does not reflect the regional differences in water needs, consumption, and systems. Counties oppose statewide mandatory water rationing programs that would establish unrealistic and unnecessary restrictions on some areas and inadequate goals for other areas. Instead, counties support a voluntary approach to water conservation that promotes a permanent "conservation ethic" in California. If water rationing does become necessary, counties will need statutory authorization to impose water rationing decisions at the county level.

Water Conservation

Counties recognize the need for local programs that promote water conservation and water storage. Water conservation may include reuse of domestic and industrial wastewater, reuse of

agriculture water, groundwater recharge, or economic incentives to invest in equipment that promotes efficiency. No conservation of water shall be recognized if the conservation arises from the fallowing of agricultural land without compensation, unless the Board of Supervisors of the affected county consents to the fallowing.

The Regional Water Quality Control Boards need to direct staff to issue permits for direct discharge of properly treated wastewater to promote reuse.

Ground Water Management

It is CSAC's position that ground water management is necessary in California and that the authority for ground water management resides at the basin level. Adequate management of water supply cannot be accomplished without effective administration of both surface and ground water resources within counties. Ground water management boundaries should recognize natural basins and responsibilities for administration should be vested in organizations of locally elected officials. Private property rights shall be addressed in any ground water management decisions.

Ground water management programs should maintain the flexibility to expeditiously address critical localized and basin-wide problems. Studies necessary to design ground water programs should be directed by local agencies with technical or economic support from state and federal programs.

Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act shifted the role of groundwater management to locals, including the development of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) which are charged with balancing groundwater use through enforceable Groundwater Sustainability Plans. It is CSAC's position that planning and land use decisions reside with the county, and therefore any planned changes must be implemented within the county land use authority.

Financing of Water Management

Counties throughout California face many funding challenges when addressing storm water, flood control, groundwater management requirements, and compliance with water conservation requirements.

CSAC supports constitutional reforms to address the unintended consequences of Proposition 218 for local governments' ability to manage water responsibly. These reforms should maintain high standards of transparency and accountability, while providing local agencies with the needed flexibility to enact funding mechanisms that will enable them to improve supply reliability, maintain water quality for public and environmental health, and protect the state's residents and businesses from harmful flooding.

Flood Control & Flood Protection

As California faces an increase in both the frequency and intensity of flood-producing weather events, long-term flood control projects are necessary to provide improved flood protection and minimize future damages. Local, state, and federal agencies should work to improve

communications, coordination, and unity of effort prior to and following a flood disaster. Counties are encouraged to look for funding opportunities to move structures out of historical and newly expanding flood plains.

CSAC supports and encourages the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to adopt innovative geo-technical (high-tech) inspections systems to identify unexpected voids and saturated sand lenses in government-authorized levees. CSAC further supports recommendations from the Army Corps for non-federal sponsors to add these techniques to annual levee inspection programs.

Counties continue to experience frustration when applying for the state and federal permits required to repair, restore, and maintain flood control facilities. Counties support streamlining of such permits and any other efforts that would allow expeditious implementation of flood control activities.

Counties recognize the need for environmental mitigation measures to protect endangered species. The unique need for ongoing and routine levee maintenance must be reconciled with reasonable mitigation requirements. Solutions could include blanket "take permit" exempting levee maintenance from compliance and a more efficient process for routine maintenance.

Counties further recognize that providing habitat and flood control may not be mutually achievable goals within river, stream, or ditch channels. Counties support the protection and enhancement of riparian ecosystems in multi-benefit flood control systems.

However, ecosystem restoration projects may provide flood control benefits and will require detailed hydraulic and other engineering studies to assess the individual and cumulative hydraulic impacts in floodways. Counties also recognize that habitat areas shall be maintained in such a manner as to not obstruct the flow of water through the channel. Further, the river, stream and ditch channels should also have blanket "take permits" issued to allow for proper cleaning of obstructions to the water flow and/or carrying capacity.

Federal and state agencies that are responsible for species that would be harmed in the course of flood control projects – such as levee reconstruction, maintenance or repairs – must be charged with the rescue of these species and not the local government performing such activities in collaboration with local jurisdictions. These agencies have the expertise and funding to identify and protect species in ways that counties cannot. This identification and rescue should be accomplished in the most expedient time frame practicable. The federal agencies should be required to consult with the local action agencies within thirty days of any species rescue determination.

In respect to locally sponsored flood control projects, CSAC shall continue to urge the administration and the legislature to fully fund the State Flood Control Subvention Program.

CSAC believes that the state flood control system must be viewed as a complete functioning system and funded accordingly. Intermittent and piecemeal efforts at mapping, maintaining, and repairing the system have proven to be inefficient, costly and generally ineffective. CSAC also

recognizes the critical need for new projects and repairs within the existing flood control infrastructure and the necessity of ensuring the ongoing maintenance of all components, from upper watershed to end-users.

Flood Protection Funding

CSAC supports statewide, multi-level funding for new flood protection projects, mapping, system improvements, and the maintenance and operation of all flood mitigation efforts. This includes upper watershed flood positive mapping and watershed rehabilitation, coastal watershed mitigations and flood protections plans, and other identified projects in each of the state's 10 flood control zones. CSAC also recognizes that appropriations or bond funds earmarked for flood protection must be equally available to all areas of the state.

- CSAC would consider the use of financial incentives to encourage local governments to adopt flood related planning activities if such incentives applied equally to all jurisdictions affected by the statewide flood control system and were based on a uniform standard, such as the Community Rating System used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- CSAC supports full funding for the State's Flood Control Subventions Program within the Department of Water Resources to ensure appropriate staffing and reimbursements for delinquent and future claims.
- CSAC supports funding mechanisms originating within all levels of government but not relying solely on ratepayer shares.
- CSAC encourages state and federal funding that is stable, predictable, and sufficient for planning, capital projects, and ongoing operation and maintenance costs.
- CSAC supports prioritizing funding for improvements to areas deemed to be at the most risk in the statewide flood control system.
- CSAC supports a variety of funding sources which may include but are not limited to: statewide bond measures, statewide and local assessments, developer fees, wheeling charges, beneficiary pays, and the creation of a maintenance endowment fund.
- CSAC supports identifying specific dollar amounts for flood protection within any bond measure and supports the minimization or elimination of local matching requirements.
- CSAC supports funding being made available for both capital costs and operation and maintenance of the system.
- All state flood protection funding shall be protected under Proposition 1A.

- CSAC will continue to support efforts to exempt flood control and storm water fees from the voter approval requirements of Proposition 218.

Flood Protection & Levee Integrity

CSAC supports the assessment of the integrity of the statewide flood control system provided it is not to the exclusion of investing in actual and critical project improvements.

- In assessing the integrity of the flood control system, CSAC believes that project levees shall be distinguished from non-project levees; and levees that protect agriculture, urban areas or critical infrastructure shall be distinguished from each other.
- CSAC supports the assessment and inclusion of non-project levees into the statewide project levee system, as they are integral to the overall water management system.
- CSAC supports the use of formal, uniform, and reliable federal standards relating to levee integrity and the flood management system upon which all flood control agencies and jurisdictions can rely.
- CSAC supports the targeted and expedited assessment of levees in problem areas and supports operators at the local level who are willing to provide their expertise to agencies tasked that are tasked with assessing the integrity of California's flood protection system.
- While CSAC recognizes the need for detailed studies of the flood protection system, we support a reasonable ratio of time and funds for this purpose to be balanced by the urgent need for actual flood protection to protect threatened areas.
- CSAC supports the use of forecast-based management of the statewide flood protection system.
- CSAC supports the rehabilitation of the upper watershed areas for partial mitigation of flood events affecting downstream reservoirs and control systems.
- CSAC supports recognition of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as a critical region of statewide importance encompassing vital water, transportation, energy, agricultural, environmental, and economic interests. As such, funding to assure the adequacy of its flood protection systems is of statewide importance.

Mapping the Flood Protection System

CSAC supports the creation of updated detailed FEMA and Statewide Awareness Maps and acknowledges the need for such maps to be created as soon as possible. The updated maps should be based on general plan build out of the watershed or a reasonable build out scenario. If FEMA must maintain a floodplain map based on existing development, then it should include a second floodplain zone based on a reasonable watershed build out.

CSAC opposes changing federal standards from the current 100-year flood designation to a 200-year standard without a clear demonstration of the benefits and the attendant amount of funding that would enable local governments to achieve the new standard.

Development in Flood Prone Areas

While CSAC recognizes the existing role of state agencies to review and comment on development proposals, it ultimately opposes any state preemption of local land use authority and reiterates that land use decisions must remain at the local level. CSAC supports the strengthening of flood protection policies in State General Plan law while recognizing the value of agricultural uses, existing natural resources and housing needs of each region in the state. In addition CSAC supports:

- Updated building standards to reflect appropriate flood prevention standards.
- Efforts to ensure that every local entity creates an emergency flood response management plan that would include such items as emergency response protocols, integrated regional communications and emergency evacuation plans.
- Updates to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Checklist to ensure that projects are evaluated for flooding impacts.

CSAC believes that new development should pay its fair share, up to the full cost of project related impacts including mitigation, to achieve a designated level of flood protection. Furthermore new development should be a part of the funding solution relative to the maintenance and operation costs of project related flood protection.

Regulatory Streamlining for Flood Protection Projects

CSAC supports improvements to the regulatory process for flood protection projects, especially those deemed to be imminent threats. These needed improvements include:

- An expedited permit process for flood protection projects, including maintenance and operation work.
- Better coordination between state and federal regulatory agencies and clear direction on flood control requirements and responsibilities.
- Programmatic Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) and standardized mitigation measures for the flood management system, levee maintenance and capital projects that fall under certain thresholds.
- CSAC opposes repeated mitigation requirements in connection with any ongoing maintenance of the flood management system, projects, and facilities.

Flood Insurance

CSAC supports outreach and notification efforts by all levels of government to people at risk in identified flood prone areas. CSAC supports the establishment of an outreach or notification program administered by the state to educate the public regarding the level of risk they face in identified flood prone areas. Such efforts by the state shall be developed with input from, and coordinated with, local government.

While CSAC supports efforts to encourage property owners to secure and maintain flood insurance, counties have concerns about the possible effects of any new state-imposed flood insurance program and would oppose any mandates requiring local governments to administer such a program.

Flood Control Protection Liability

CSAC opposes the transfer of primary liability for the statewide flood control system to local jurisdictions and believes there should be a proportional and equitable distribution of liability between all levels of government associated with the statewide flood control system. CSAC supports the enactment of a State Hazard Mitigation Plan law to provide funds for targeted relocation efforts in high-risk areas. In addition, CSAC supports a defined standard of liability for flood control infrastructure

Delta & State Water Policy

CSAC acknowledges the reliance of counties on the Delta as a water delivery system, and recognizes the urgency with which all of the Delta partners, including the State, must act to resolve and fund infrastructure, environmental and supply issues.

As the nation's most populous state, California faces many complicated and compelling water resource issues. CSAC recognizes the complexities of water use and distribution throughout the state and has reiterated its position on this issue over the years through various policy statements, including, but not limited to support for statutory protection of counties of origin and watershed areas, support for existing water rights, the need for new and expanded water resources, and the need for local water conservation efforts.

Decisions regarding the Delta necessitate the inclusion of policy direction in CSAC's platform to ensure consideration of county interests. These proposed policies recognize the Delta as a critical region of statewide importance encompassing vital water, transportation, energy, environment, agriculture and economic interests. CSAC believes that any proposed Delta solutions be implemented in a manner that:

- Respects the affected counties' land use authority, revenues, public health and safety, economic development, water rights, and agricultural viability.
- Promotes recreation and environmental protection.
- Ensures Delta counties' status as voting members of any proposed Delta governance structure.

- Improves flood protection for delta residents, property, and infrastructure.
- Improves and protects the Delta ecosystem, water quality, flows and supply.
- Ensures consistency with affected counties adopted policies and plans.
- Secures financial support for flood management, improved emergency response, preservation of agriculture, protection of water resources, and enhancement and restoration of habitat.
- Accords special recognition, and advances the economic vitality of “heritage” or “legacy” communities in the Delta.
- Demonstrates a clearly evidenced public benefit to any proposed changes to the boundaries of the Delta.
- Support development of adequate water supply, utilizing the concept of "Regional Self Sufficiency" whereby each region maximizes conservation and recycled water use, implements storage (surface and groundwater) and considers desalination, as necessary.

SECTION 6: PARKS AND RECREATION

Counties are encouraged to consider supporting the efforts of the California Association of Regional Park and Open Space Administrators to provide for the health, safety and quality of life for all Californians by protecting parkland and open space.

Counties support statewide efforts to provide funding for planning, capital investments, and programs to develop access to parks for all persons.

Counties request better staffing of State Parks lands which have become overused and under-patrolled. This has led to an inundation of trash, human waste, pollution, public safety issues, and fire threat which greatly impact counties and cities that house the parks.

Counties request better and more efficient staffing and hiring practices for federal land managers that support the goal of hiring processes from recruitment to evaluation, and background to start date within 90 days.

SECTION 7: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

CSAC supports policies and legislation that aim to promote improved markets for recyclable materials, and encourages the creation of economic incentives for the use of recycled materials, and especially the use of recycled content in products sold in California. Counties encourage the

state to look at the issues of recycling through not just an environmental context, but a market issue to increase the value and reduce the cost of recycled materials. Counties also support the expansion of the Beverage Container Recycling Program.

It is critical that solutions be developed to address a number of global policy reforms, that have dramatically reduced California's market for recycled plastic and paper. Solutions should focus on market expansion, source reduction, recycled content requirements, and a focus on reducing single-use plastic materials.

CSAC shall support legislation that:

- Protects local solid waste franchising and fee-setting authority.
- Provides for the use of performance standards and alternative daily cover for landfills.
- Requires state facility cooperation with local jurisdictions on waste reduction to meet AB 939 and organic waste diversion goals.
- Promotes the development of conversion technologies as an alternative to land filling, and provides state funding to local jurisdictions for such projects; provides full diversion credit and greenhouse gas emission reduction credits under applicable state law; and, provides that all energy produced by these conversion technology facilities be designated as renewable energy.
- Promotes or requires more corporate producer responsibility for packaging, including take-back programs for items too complicated for recycling or safe disposal.

CSAC shall oppose legislation that:

- Preempts local planning decisions regarding solid waste facility siting.
- Preempts local solid waste and AB 939 fee-setting authority.
- Requires burdensome changes to locally adopted plans.

CSAC does not oppose legislation that assesses fees on solid waste that is disposed of out of state, as long as the fees reflect the pro-rata share of California Integrated Waste Management Board services used.

CSAC supports an Extended Producer Responsibility Framework Approach to the end-of-life management of products, which creates effective producer-lead reduction, reuse and recycling programs, to deal with a product's lifecycle impacts from design through end of life management, without relying solely on state and local governments.

In order to comply with the diversion requirements of the California Integrated Waste Management Act, local governments must continue to have the ability to direct the flow of waste. Given federal and state court decisions which restrict this ability, counties are encouraged to consider supporting legislation which ensures local governments' authority to direct the flow of waste.

CSAC supports efforts to improve access to resources that would help counties and our waste hauler partners implement the State's Organic Waste Diversion Regulations as required under SB 1383 (Lara, Chapter 395, Statutes of 2016). In addition, CSAC supports efforts to create more flexible SB 1383 implementation deadlines and requirements as a co-equal partner in achieving California's waste management goals.

SECTION 8: ENDANGERED SPECIES

While protection of endangered species provides great benefits to counties, state and federal endangered species acts have widespread effects on public projects, agriculture, timber and other industries in California, including the resulting impact on county revenues. Both acts should be amended to provide for the following:

- Recognition and protection of private property rights and local government's land use authority.
- All those who benefit should pay the costs. It should be recognized that inequity exists concerning the implementation of the existing acts in that the cost of species protection on private property is borne by a few property owners for the benefit of all.
- If Congress and the state legislature deem the protection of certain species is of national interest, then the responsibility for that protection, including the costs, should be assumed by all who benefit through federal and/or state funding, and a process should be adopted which is consistent with other public projects of national interest.
- Applications for a listing should be required to include a map of critical habitat, a recovery plan and an economic and environmental analysis of costs and benefits.
- The development of a delisting process that is as aggressively adhered to as the listing process.
- The creation of a scientifically based and efficient process for delisting.
- Include independent scientific peer review, local public hearings, and equal access to judicial review.
- Delegation of implementation of the Federal Endangered Species Act to the state.

- Full compensation to property owners when historical or future use of their land is diminished.
- Use of public lands first for multi-species protection.
- Prohibit the distribution of public grant funds to private entities that seek to support or oppose listings or delisting of endangered species.
- Control of protected species that prey upon and reduce either the adult or juvenile population of any listed species.
- Protection of responsible current land uses.
- Support recovery efforts of endangered species.
- The ability to produce food, fiber, and all other agricultural products is not abridged.
- Agricultural produces should not be held liable for any “take” that occurs during normal agricultural operations.

SECTION 9: PUBLIC LANDS

Plans for state and federal public lands shall be coordinated and compatible with local general plans and zoning where applicable. Private uses on public federal lands, exclusive of Native American lands, should be required to comply with applicable state and local laws to the extent that it does not burden local government. In addition, counties should be reimbursed for lost tax revenues when land is transferred for non-profit or public uses.

Counties should have an opportunity to review and comment on management decisions affecting their economies, general plans and resources. Public participation, including public hearings, should be required in land use planning on public lands to ensure that economic or environmental concerns are addressed.

Counties encourage the operation and ownership of land resources under private rather than governmental control. Lands acquired by government or utilities for specific purposes which are no longer essential should be returned to private ownership – with preference to previous owners where possible – and without reservation of water and mineral rights. Small, isolated units of publicly held property should be offered for sale to private operators, with preference to adjacent owners.

Government should be required to demonstrate, using reliable data, an integrated program of land use and the need for the acquisition before being permitted to purchase, further expand, or

transfer land from one governmental agency to another. Management plans and budgetary information should be required on all lands proposed for acquisition by governmental agencies prior to such acquisition, so that they can be made part of the public hearing process.

The practice of government funding through grants or other means to organizations and foundations in order to purchase private land that will be resold or donated to some governmental entity threatens to diminish the tax base of local units of government. As a result, counties' tax base should be kept whole in the event of federal or state purchase of land.

Counties support the multiple use of public lands. Uses of these lands include grazing, mining, timber, wildlife and recreation. Lands under governmental control should be actively managed in concert with private activities to encourage the greatest use and improvement. Counties believe that timber harvest, mining, and grazing activities are a valuable component of ecosystem management in some instances and that recreational activities, impacts on wildlife, and natural events like fires and floods must be considered. Properly managed land results in higher sustained yields of water, forage, timber, minerals, and energy. Grazing and logging are important elements of the multiple-use concept. Therefore, counties support efforts to minimize additional acreage designated as wilderness, unless otherwise supported by the affected local governments, and all of their issues and concerns are addressed or mitigated to their satisfaction.

Reforestation and continued management of public lands with suitable soils for producing forest crops are essential to maintaining a viable forest industry in California. Timber stand improvement is needed and required for producing sustainable yields both for quality and quantity of timber products. Additionally, comprehensive fuels management programs are encouraged for the protection and sustainability of all public lands. Counties support economically and environmentally sound management of forests for the production of forest products, which support local industry, recreational uses, and, in the case of National Forests, maximize federal payments for support of local government.

Federal and State Compensation

Adequate compensation must be made available to local governments to offset the costs of providing services to public lands. Current federal compensation programs, such as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (PL 106-393), should be retained with respect to land where harvesting is severely limited or no longer occurs. Counties continue to support a per acre charge for any land which has historically received revenue timber receipts.

County revenues generated from federal lands are at great risk. In order to ensure that a system is in place that is fair and equitable, a revenue sharing and/or Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) system must meet three criteria:

- 1) Equitable - The federal government must compensate the state and counties at a level that is consistent with revenues that would be expected to be generated if such lands were not in federal ownership and management.

- 2) Predictable – The system in place must provide some assurance and predictability of the level and timing of revenues; and,
- 3) Sustainable - Revenues should be maintained over time; and changes in federal policies in the future should not adversely affect local communities.

CSAC shall continue to pressure the state and the federal government to meet its statutory obligation to annually pay local agencies full in-lieu fees and PILT for state and federal purchased properties. And while the PILT is funded through the federal annual appropriations process, CSAC supports efforts to include its sustainable funding through an entitlement process. CSAC supports the premise that no new state or federal acquisitions of private property shall occur until state in-lieu fees and federal PILT are fully funded. Federal legislation is needed to provide additional compensation for those public land counties that meet specified hardship criteria. In light of the increasing use of public lands and the danger of mega wildfires throughout the state, these funds are more crucial than ever.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Exchanges

Counties recognize that efficient management of public lands requires land adjustments to ensure manageable units and prevent conflicts with adjacent private land uses. Land exchanges and purchases are the usual means available to the two federal agencies.

Counties will support the federal agencies in these exchange and consolidation efforts when:

- 1) Better and more productive management of public land will result;
- 2) Counties affected are consulted and given opportunity to help determine acquisition of local lands in exchange process and negative effects are fully mitigated;
- 3) County revenues, including PL 106-393 and PILT are protected or enhanced;
- 4) Areas slated for disposal in exchanges are included in the county general plan and classified as to probable use (e.g. residential, TPZ, commercial); and,
- 5) Land-for-land exchanges enhance the counties and result in no net loss of value.

Counties support efforts to streamline and shorten the federal land exchange procedure so mutually beneficial consolidations will be more attractive and expeditious.

Local Use of Public Lands

Counties support legislation and land management policies to enable local agencies to acquire state and federal lands for public purposes. There are cases where viable excess public lands and not locally pursued due to the difficulty and time investment to acquire it. Where lands do not have an existing use, are not aligned with core agency purposes, or are effectively surplus or vestigial, the process for transfer to local governments should be streamlined,

Waste Disposal on Public Lands

Counties experience considerable difficulty locating and maintaining facilities to dispose of solid waste. Counties with large areas of state and federal lands used for recreation are required to assume the responsibility of disposing solid waste generated by these recreational activities. The entities that administer these public lands should assume responsibility for providing sites for solid waste disposal and funds for development, maintenance, and operation of such sites that are equitable and match its public use.

SECTION 10: INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Counties support aggressive action by federal, state, and local agencies to limit the spread, and to enhance the eradication of, identified invasive plants and animal species. Counties support prioritizing the efforts that are most attainable and cost-effective.

SECTION 11: PREDATOR CONTROL

Counties benefit from the established federal-state cooperative programs to support predator control to reduce livestock depredation, prevent property damage, and protect public health.

Counties support predator control program efficiency through cooperative federal-state-county programs.

Counties support expanded program funding through the Federal-State Cooperative Animal Damage Control program and strongly support equal cost sharing between counties and cooperative agencies.

SECTION 12: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

CSAC supports legislative and regulatory proposals that maximize California counties' ability to effectively mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made disasters and public health emergencies, protecting both physical and fiscal health. Such proposals must recognize that the 58 California counties have unique characteristics, differing capacities, and diverse environments. In addition, emergency management and homeland security policies, practices, and funding should be designed to promote innovation at the local level and to permit maximum flexibility, so that services can best target individual community needs, hazards, threats, and capacities. To achieve this broad-based policy direction, CSAC shall:

- Support adherence to the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) processes, especially as they relate to the operational area concept.

- Advocate for broad county access to technology and infrastructure that offer effective and wide-ranging communications capabilities for alerting the public in emergency situations.
- Work to ensure that proposals that impose responsibilities upon counties are accompanied by full and flexible funding. This includes additional funding and authority to the California Office of Emergency Services to support disaster recovery by providing local jurisdictions advance cost reimbursements for projects that have been obligated or otherwise approved under a State or federal disaster declaration.
- Advocate for improved coordination between state and local offices of emergency services and state and local departments with health and safety-related responsibilities.
- Support full, sustained, and flexible funding for on-going emergency preparedness and all hazard planning, including provisions for establishing a baseline emergency management capability in each county.
- Support grant processes, procedures, and guidelines that allow full funding for personnel in order to carry out emergency management and homeland security mandates.
- Support efforts to reform the existing state and federal grant funding structure to create a streamlined and flexible process for Homeland Security, emergency management, and disaster preparedness programs and services. State funding should assist underfunded local governments and allow them to compete for federal grants where there is a required match.
- Support full and flexible funding for on-going emergency preparedness exercises and training, focusing on an all-hazards approach, at the state and local level.
- Support full and flexible funding for emergency communication system interoperability between all local government agencies and the State of California.
- Advocate at the federal level for policies and requirements that are practically achievable by local governments.
- Advocate for resources, staffing and efficiency efforts that ensure reasonable and timely reimbursements of emergency disaster funds.

Fire Protection

Fires are best prevented and fought through long-term fuels management and other mitigation actions. Such fire protection efforts must be integrated and supported by other natural resource programs and policies. Counties support the achievement of a sustainable ecosystem and the maintenance of healthy forests while providing defensible space for protection of life and property. Governmental agencies alone cannot achieve fire safe communities; private property owners are also obligated to take necessary actions to reduce their fire risk.

Counties further support an increase in sustained state and federal funding for fuels management. However, given existing concerns expressed by counties regarding the allocation of fire protection resources, it is imperative that local governments be included in any effort to develop appropriate allocation of these resources between pre-fire management and fire suppression.

Fires are best fought by rapid response from trained firefighters. Counties support the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) reconnaissance and rapid response systems. Counties support state funding of local fire agencies – both paid and volunteer – for wildland fire response, and local Fire Safe Councils. CSAC supports funding for Sheriff's offices for evacuation planning, local OES's for County vegetation management, and Firewise Community support.

One of the biggest barriers to completing more risk mitigation work is funding. Counties have invested heavily to build out community resilience and it is critical that all levels of government share the cost of this work. CSAC supports:

- Ongoing, sustainable state and federal funding to maximize community resilience, especially in the form of direct funding to counties.
- State and federal assistance to residents for mitigation work, including assistance for home hardening, via direct funding and/or tax credits.

Prescribed Fire

The state of California should pursue alternate and practical methods of biomass disposal that conserves energy in order to reduce the wildland fuel volumes consumed by prescribed fire.

Where alternative methods are not available, the state of California should assume greater responsibility in the development of a less restrictive program of prescribed fire for forest and range improvement, enhancement of wildlife, watershed management and reduction of major wildfire hazards.

Solutions must be found to the problems of liability when a county maintains a controlled burning program.

CAL FIRE and the State Air Resources Board should develop a joint policy concerning controlled burning so that counties will be dealing with one state government policy, rather than with two conflicting state agency policies.

Environmental Health

Recent environmental hazard events across the State have demonstrated the need to bolster enforcement actions and local authority to prevent environmental incidents from occurring. Counties support policies to prevent and protect the public and the environment from hazardous incidents by improving enforcement of hazardous waste laws and regulations, and strengthening oversight and regulations of facilities that treat, store, or dispose toxic substances and pose an endangerment to public health and safety. Additionally, Counties also support legislation that expedites the cleanup of environmental hazards, increases resources for remediation activities, and promotes community engagement. Also, Counties support streamlining of environmental review processes for purposes of timely vegetation management along public rights-of-way that mitigate risks of wildfire and protect critical thoroughfares and emergency evacuation routes.

SECTION 13: WILDFIRES AND HOME INSURANCE

Counties across the state are building resilience through risk mitigation work, however, communities are not seeing the benefits of this work reflected in the cost and availability of insurance coverage. The state must develop clear mitigation standards and transparency on how the mitigation work will impact the availability and affordability of insurance policies.

Home insurance companies are utilizing many data points, including new technology like drone and satellite imagery, to decide whether to insure homes. While the insurance industry has said this facilitates the establishment of rates that better reflect a property's risk, little is shared with consumers about how companies reach these conclusions. More disclosure is necessary when assessing risk scores affecting a policyholder's affordability and accessibility. Consumers must have robust education on what goes in to these scores, as well as clear and easy to navigate pathways to address and appeal rulings about their property.

SECTION 1: ENERGY

This section should be viewed in conjunction with Chapter 4, which includes CSAC's Energy Policy Guidelines. It is CSAC's policy that the state and the 58 counties should seek to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency. Counties are encouraged to undertake vigorous energy action programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each county. When developing such action programs counties should:

- Assess available conservation and renewable energy options and take action to implement conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy development when feasible.
- Consider the incorporation of energy policies as an optional element in the county general plan.
- Consider energy concerns when making land use decisions and encourage development patterns which result in energy efficiency.

In order to meet the state's energy needs, counties fully recognize the importance of establishing a cooperative relationship between other levels of government and the private sector. This includes working with public and private utilities that serve their areas to develop energy transmission corridors and to minimize delays in approvals and land use conflicts.

With respect to alternative and renewable energy sources, the state and counties should encourage use of agricultural, forestry and non-recyclable urban wastes for generating usable energy. They should also take into consideration the other benefits of waste-to-energy production. Additionally, the state should encourage, and counties should explore, the development of cogeneration projects at the local level. In respect to public power options, counties support efforts that enhance local governments' ability to become community aggregators of electricity.

It must be recognized that in many parts of California, especially rural areas, power outages have become a regular occurrence for a number of reasons including a lack of grid reliability and the implementation of fire-safety measures. This not only puts communities and individuals at risk, but contributes to the expanding use of backup generators, propane reliance, and hesitance to transition to cleaner, more reliable technologies. This is an unsustainable situation that needs urgent state attention.

Counties support the encouragement of new sustainable energy generation facilities by the provision of increased incentives and a streamlined permitting process. However, state government needs to maintain regulatory oversight of these facilities. Lastly, counties oppose state acquisition and/or management of electric generating or transmission facilities.

SECTION 154: CANNABIS

On November 8, 2016, voters passed Proposition 64, the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (AUMA), legalizing the adult use of cannabis in California. AUMA contains broad local regulatory and taxation authority, allowing local governments to decide how best to regulate – and impose local taxes on – the retail sale and cultivation of cannabis in their respective communities while integrating local regulatory programs within a larger state licensing system.

Counties have a stake in shaping the broader statewide landscape of cannabis regulation in California as it has a significant impact on local government operations and serves as an important economic driver in many communities. The success of cannabis programs is dependent on strong state and local partnerships. It is imperative that state agencies recognize the role counties play in the regulation of cannabis and are responsive to local needs.

As the Legislature and state agencies develop regulations relating to medical and adult-use cannabis laws, counties put forth the following policy principles to guide CSAC positions and advocacy on cannabis regulation.

Cannabis Licensing, Regulation, and Local Control

Counties must be able to enact prohibitions or regulations in the face of threats to public and environmental health, safety, and general welfare. Such decisions represent legislative judgments made by locally elected bodies about the wisdom and need for local control over a complicated land use issue. Under well settled constitutional separation of powers principles, deference must be afforded to the legislative judgments made by locally elected officials, who are in the best position to evaluate local conditions, community needs, and the public welfare. Accordingly, CSAC believes that cannabis regulations proposed by the state must allow individual local governments the discretion to either adopt that program in full, to modify the program as they see fit, or to opt out of the program completely.

Local government police powers and authority over taxation and fees must be respected in the development of any regulations implementing both medical and adult use cannabis laws. This includes support for local land use authority and the ability for counties to ban the commercial adult use or medical cannabis retail sale, delivery, manufacturing, and/or cultivation within the unincorporated area.

The Medicinal and Adult Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act (MAUCRSA) outlines categories of licenses for the cultivation, sale, manufacture, distribution, and testing of cannabis. The law contains restrictions on how many licenses can be held by a single entity, and counties support prohibitions on the cross-ownerships of licenses. Counties support limitations of Type Five Large Cultivation licenses, which are defined under Business and Professions Code section 26061.

Counties support a dual licensing system, which requires the verification of a local license as a condition precedent to the issuance of a state license, and the development of a strong license revocation policy and procedure for violations of license requirements. Wherever possible, counties support practical streamlining of cannabis licensing and permitting while maintaining local control. Burdensome administrative barriers only serve to discourage entry into the legal market and put a strain on state and local resources.

Cannabis Cultivation and Environment Impacts

As cannabis cultivation in California grows and evolves, it is critical to have a functioning statewide track and trace system, designed with compatibility and full integration with local programs. Local governments should have access to both the state track and trace system and laboratory test results for cannabis and cannabis products.

In addition, counties support integration with local geographic mapping and information systems, especially with respect to cultivation sites. This should include integration and consultation with resource conservation districts and watershed management plans.

Counties urge action to reduce environmental degradation and ensure the responsible use of resources, including water and electricity, in all aspects of cannabis cultivation, manufacturing, and retail. CSAC believes responsible state and local agencies should be given clear guidance and adequate resources to regulate and enforce environmental laws relating to cannabis. CSAC also supports a requirement that state agencies coordinate with local governments to ensure uniform application in enforcement efforts.

Cannabis Enforcement and Public Safety

Counties strongly urge the state to fully enforce cannabis regulations, and to provide resources for local enforcement efforts. Combatting illicit cannabis is a key public safety issue in many counties, and there should be dedicated resources for the active enforcement of illicit cannabis activities on public land. Counties requires state action and assistance to stop unlicensed commercial activity and diversion of cannabis and cannabis products. This includes access to track and trace data as well as inspections of cannabis retail establishments, manufacturing locations, and cultivation sites to ensure adherence to state and local laws and policies.

Counties support the development and implementation of state standards to protect public safety, with regards to cannabis, including:

- Enforceable standards for impaired driving.
- Employer rights to maintain competency for duty and a drug-free workplace.
- Protections for worker safety and security in the cannabis industry.

Cannabis Labeling, Testing, and Advertising

Strong cannabis testing and labeling standards are critical to protect public health and safety. Counties support uniform potency standards and the use of use state-run labs for pesticide, heavy metal, and biological testing for enforcement purposes. Cannabis packaging should be designed to display no appeal for children, and counties support the requirement of childproof containers, where appropriate.

Counties encourage the state to develop standards for the recognition of a particular appellation of origin of cannabis cultivated in a certain geographical region.

Cannabis Resources and Revenue

Sufficient funding is required for adequate staffing at the state and local level to conduct regular inspections of dispensaries, cultivation, and manufacturing facilities, to conduct investigations and enforcement activity, and to quickly respond to and resolve complaints in a timely manner.

Counties depend on cannabis tax revenue to support regulatory schemes and enforcement. To help accomplish this it is important that counties have as much access to cannabis business data, like track and trace, as possible. The state should work with counties to find ways to encourage tax compliance in the absence of adequate banking solutions.

Federal Regulation

Californians voted to allow for the recreational cultivation, sale, and use of cannabis, however the federal government's ban poses serious roadblocks and risks. State and local control must be respected on the regulation and enforcement of these issues. Counties call on the federal government to declassify cannabis as a Schedule I drug and remove all conflicts under federal law. The federal government should allow banking services for the cannabis industry to reduce the public safety issues posed by a cash-based industry.

Best Practices & Data

Counties benefit from the of sharing best practices, lessons learned, and model ordinances on cannabis regulation and taxation. CSAC encourages collaboration between local and state agencies, including ongoing dialogue about implementation efforts, tax rates, enforcement issues, and other issues of significance. To enhance this, there should be adequate local representation on the state's Cannabis Advisory Committee to help inform state regulatory agencies and other stakeholders about local conditions, concerns, and issues of significance.

It is important to have statewide data collection and additional research and monitoring of trends regarding the impacts of cannabis – including impacts to public health and enforcement issues. Counties urge the state to share such data and research with local governments.

Public Health

Counties support widespread communication on the impacts of cannabis on public health, especially related to impaired driving and youth. This should include the development of strong, effective substance abuse prevention and education campaigns at the state level, with input from counties, and resources for local education.



The California County Platform | Chapter 4 Energy

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors November 2024

INTRODUCTION

The following policy guidelines cover a wide range of energy issues of significant interest to county governments. This policy direction will assist CSAC with its efforts to represent county interests on energy proposals moving through the legislative process.

SECTION 1: TAX AND REVENUE IMPACTS

State and legislative decisions concerning energy issues shall include provisions to avoid negative impacts on local government and schools.

Local governments rely on property tax revenues and franchise fees from utilities to provide essential public services. These revenues, as well as property tax revenues from alternative energy facilities, must be protected to ensure that local governments can continue to provide essential services. Counties support statewide energy needs by siting new power plants, and alternative energy facilities, bringing old power plants back on-line, and enacting long-term conservation measures.

SECTION 2: ENERGY GENERATION

Counties support efforts to ensure that California has an adequate supply of safe, reliable energy at the most competitive prices possible, while adhering to the state's priorities of conservation, renewables, new generation, and new transmission. While CSAC supports a statewide assessment and planning for future transmission needs, counties oppose transmission corridor designations that ignore the local land use decision-making process.

Counties oppose state ownership of power plants because of the impact on local government revenue streams, water rights, the operation of hydro facilities, and the efficient management of such systems, including the economic uncertainty associated with state ownership of power plants. In the event of state ownership, all impacts on local government shall be mitigated.

Renewable Energy

Counties support establishing incentives that will encourage the development and use of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, and geothermal resources. Counties also support promoting the timely development of new infrastructure, such as new electric transmission, needed to facilitate renewable energy development.

To encourage local siting of renewable energy facilities, counties support restoring authority to assess alternative energy facilities such as commercial solar facilities currently exempt under SB 871 (Chapter 41, Statutes 2014).

Counties support the construction and operation of biomass facilities through the establishment of state policies that will ensure sustainable long-term commitments to resource supply and electrical generation purchases at a price that supports resource-to-energy conversion. (See also: Chapter 3, Section 2 of the County Platform)

Counties shall commit to examine their own policies on alternative energy for any potential impacts that discourage the use of such systems.

Counties support payments to qualified facilities consistent with state and federal standards for renewable energy sources.

Counties support streamlining the approval and environmental review process for new power plants and any building using alternative sources of energy.

Energy Siting

Counties support providing incentives to local agencies to site energy facilities. The following incentives would stimulate the development and siting of more energy generation facilities:

- *Funding to streamline the siting process at the local level.* Funds would be available to reimburse cities and counties for the costs of permits, environmental review and other local expenses in order to expedite the process at the local level.
- *Energy facility incentive payments.* Financial incentives for cities and counties that approve new generation facilities, expand existing generation facilities, improve the efficiency of facilities, or to build renewable projects, including photovoltaics, fuel cells or cogeneration. Increased incentives would be given to those facilities that generate power beyond the demand of the host jurisdiction's facilities alone.
- *Property tax allocation incentives.* Any city or county that approves siting of a privately developed generating facility should receive 100% of the property tax of that facility.
- *Waiving charges.* To stimulate development of projects such as cogeneration facilities, standby charges for generating facilities should be waived.
- *Aligning processes at various levels.* Streamlining of timeframes currently associated with the state and federal regulatory process for siting power generating facilities.

Generators

Counties support efforts to allow local agencies to retain regulatory oversight over generators by statutorily changing the threshold from 50 megawatts to 100 megawatts.

Counties support additional state grant funding for back-up generation for essential facilities.

Counties support additional state grant funding for air quality compliance for emergency generation facilities.

SECTION 3: PUBLIC POWER

Counties support measures that enhance public power options available to local governments.

Counties support measures that enhance local government's ability to become community aggregators of electricity.

SECTION 4: CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY

CSAC and its member counties are committed to reducing electricity use and increasing efficiency in their facilities. Counties support a rate structure that recognizes conservation efforts.

Counties support development of a statewide grant program to fund energy conservation and energy management equipment in local government facilities. Counties support grants and loans that promote energy efficiency among businesses and homeowners.

Counties support the adoption of real-time metering and time-of-use metering, allowing consumers to make choices about their consumption of electrical energy based on the real-time price of electricity.

Counties support providing incentives, including the use of new technologies, for businesses that generate their own energy, and support encouraging businesses to make excess capacity available to utilities.

SECTION 5: NOTIFICATION OF POWER OUTAGES

Counties, as providers of essential services, must be provided with adequate notice regarding any planned rotating block outages.

SECTION 6: BATTERY STORAGE

Counties recognize the increasingly important role of battery storage in the creation of a resilient energy grid. Counties encourage the state and industry to work in conjunction with

local governments to facilitate the construction of these projects. However, it is critical that local land-use authority is preserved in the citing and permitting of new battery facilities.

Counties support operator-funded and maintained fire suppression systems, and other appropriate safety mechanisms, for battery facilities of all sizes.

SECTION 7: MISCELLANEOUS

Counties support a utility market structure that ensures that energy supply and demand is not unreasonably constrained by artificially imposed price caps.

Counties support efforts to encourage alternative energy solutions to be instituted in businesses and residences.

Counties support the right to implement Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs and establish property assessment liens for energy conservation and renewable energy investments. PACE programs create jobs, stimulate business growth, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and add lasting value to residential and commercial properties without increasing risks of mortgage defaults.

Counties support an amendment to the California Integrated Waste Management Act (CIWMA) to provide full diversion credit for cogeneration facilities to further encourage their development. The CIWM Act currently establishes a 10% limitation on solid waste diversion that occurs through transformation.



The California County Platform | Chapter 5

Government Operations

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

Local control is the primary policy cornerstone of CSAC. Counties should determine the scope and extent of the government services they will render in response to the needs and desires of the local community. While counties do act as agents of the state and federal government in performing services in some policy areas – and do so with substantial state or federal financing – these activities should be distinguished from areas of local interest when determining the basis for applying statewide standards and supervision.

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Scope of Services

Counties should have full discretion over the scope and extent of government services offered. Each county should further examine its ability to support such services, always subject to the requirement to provide mandated services as state agents.

Uniformity in Services

When performing mandated duties, the degree of uniformity required should be carefully determined, with emphasis on the purpose of each requirement and the goal of uniformity to serve a specific beneficial purpose. This will enable progress through the application of a variety of administrative approaches and methods.

Freedom to Devise Program Operating Policies

Counties should be free to devise their own operating policies for all government programs not financed wholly or substantially by federal or state funds.

Whole Responsibility with Board of Supervisors

To be directly responsible to the people, general control of county government should be placed wholly with the board of supervisors.

Non-Partisan Nature of County Government

The office of county supervisor should continue to be nonpartisan, enabling the people to vote on the basis of local issues and to enable supervisors to solve local problems without binding allegiances to political parties.

SECTION 2: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

Different government organizational structures exist throughout the state; legal constraints and time-consuming restrictions have severely limited the use of the charter as a method of obtaining local control. The State Constitution and statutes should be revised to provide authorization for counties to independently organize by local control.

The principle of local control also applies to the issue of elected "ministerial" officials. The board of supervisors should have authority to submit proposals for appointment of elected officials to the voters. Also, counties should be allowed to submit to their electorate the questions of whether elected non-legislative officials, except District Attorney, should be appointed by the board of supervisors.

Counties should be allowed maximum flexibility to structure their organization through the process of "local option control."

SECTION 3: LIBRARY SERVICES

The continued vitality of our free and democratic society and the effective operation of government at all levels is dependent on an informed and knowledgeable citizenry. Libraries continue to expand their role beyond repositories of written knowledge to now include STEM education, activity areas, meeting rooms, computer access, non-book rentals, services for job-seekers, and often serve as a resource for the homeless community, among other services. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all levels of government, including county government, to ensure that all people have access to sources of knowledge and information that affect their personal and professional lives and society as a whole.

The public library is a supplement to the formal system of free public education and a source of information and inspiration to persons of all ages, as well as a resource for continuing education. As such, public libraries deserve adequate financial support from all levels of government.

Counties are among the traditional providers of library and information services to the people. Counties form a natural region for the provision of this service. Citizens expect free library services that are responsive to local needs.

Intergovernmental Relationships

The state is urged to recognize public libraries as part of the system of public education and should continue providing financial assistance to support their operation. The state should also continue and strengthen funding for the interjurisdictional library cooperatives established under the California Library Services Act, Education Code Sections 18700 through 18766.

Privacy and Censorship

Recognizing the right of an individual to privacy, circulation records and other records identifying the names of library users with specific materials, including Internet usage, are to be confidential in nature.

SECTION 4: ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS

Counties support efficient and accessible voting for all. As a democratic republic, the people and their representatives control government and the people's will is expressed through voting. Election policies and administration should strike a balance between uniformity and flexibility, but should aim to further the nation's democratic and republican nature by allowing and encouraging voting by a broad range of citizens, so that the government's decisions express the will of the people as fully as possible.

Reimbursement for Special and Vacancy Election Costs

Counties support efforts to reinstate language directing the state to provide reimbursement to counties that hold a special election to fill a legislative or Congressional vacancy and other special elections. Until such reimbursement is provided, counties support efforts to reduce special election administrative costs borne by counties.

All Mail Ballot Elections

Given the increasing popularity of voting by mail, the rising costs of administering elections due to state and federal regulations, and the positive effect it would have on voter participation, counties support proposals that would give Boards of Supervisors the option of holding any election by mail in lieu of in-person voting.

State Payments for Ballot Real Estate

While cities and special districts reimburse counties for the proportionate cost of administering elections on their behalf, the state traditionally does not. Counties support efforts to seek more upfront funding from the state for administration of elections, particularly for those direct costs imposed by the state.

SECTION 5: BROADBAND

In 2021, Governor Newsom signed a measure that created a structure and framework for a statewide, state-owned, open-access middle-mile broadband network. Counties believe this network is critical to finally closing the digital divide, are committed to its successful implementation, and will oppose efforts to divert its funding or reduce its scope.

Counties support the expansion of broadband (high-speed internet service) to all parts of the state to drive economic development and job opportunities, support county service delivery, and improve health, education, and public safety outcomes for community members. This

should include funding for technologies that can address underserved areas where fiber is not financially or practically viable.

Broadband must be capable of supporting current technology standards and speeds in order for counties to realize these benefits. This may require infrastructure solutions specific to a given county or region. Counties support efficiencies that offer local jurisdictions the opportunity for simultaneously running fiber when private entities are undergrounding powerlines. Access and adoption are both necessary elements that should be supported in state and federal legislative and regulatory proposals. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Establishing and maintaining reliable broadband in unserved or underserved communities;
- Promoting the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that comprise digital literacy;
- Making broadband affordable for all households;
- Maximizing funding for infrastructure; and
- Reducing infrastructure deployment barriers.

Counties oppose efforts by telecommunications service providers to relieve themselves of obligations to serve as a carrier of last resort (COLR) for “plain old telephone service,” (POTS) landline phone services. While counties believe that closing the digital divide is essential to ensuring all communities can thrive, removal of COLR obligations would reduce the availability of essential communication services and the ability for residents and community leaders to respond to emergencies, particularly when there is an electrical power outage.

SECTION 6: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Counties are committed to using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology responsibly, transparently, and ethically to improve processes, enhance services to residents, and support employees to do their best work. To preserve the county priority of local control, the state should support the ability of counties to independently determine the scope and extent of AI integration within county government services. The state should not infringe on county operational policies and practices, inclusive of employment practices.

Counties expect the state to commit to transparent decision-making processes regarding AI state legislation and regulations; formally soliciting county input and involvement. If the state requires the use of a particular AI technology or platform over another, then the state must be responsible for evaluating, maintaining, and keeping it current, using state resources. If the state makes a regulation, it is the state’s responsibility to ensure the vendor is upholding standards and compliance. Counties support the state auditing or monitoring the AI industry and technologies for compliance with state law.

Counties urge the state to issue guidance on best practices for AI technology that safeguards data protection and fosters innovation, without placing additional requirements on counties to oversee compliance. Wherever feasible, this guidance should be aligned with relevant federal

regulations. This guidance should not supersede local control in how counties decide to use AI technology. The State’s guidance should include, but not be limited to the need for algorithmic systems to have a high accuracy rate and include details for a competitive procurement process. That guidance should include questions to ask vendors to demonstrate how they have attempted to remove bias from their products.

Election security is paramount, and as those charged with administering elections, counties are supportive of efforts to protect the integrity of elections, thereby preventing and/or identifying deepfakes and misinformation. For all other policy issues or programs that may be affected by artificial intelligence, CSAC supports evaluating the impact of artificial intelligence and the appropriate response through the lens of the values described in this section.

Counties encourage AI-related legislation to follow existing state law on copyright, cybersecurity, privacy, and public record laws. Legislation should not be introduced that exempts AI from existing copyright, cybersecurity, privacy, and public record laws. Any proposed state law related to AI technology or platforms must comply with existing data requirements and applicable laws, including but not limited to the California Consumer Privacy Act, Criminal Justice Information System, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, California Confidentiality of Medical Information Act, California Public Records Act. Counties recognize public trust in AI technologies is still developing and control over the use of disclosure statements should be maintained at the county level.

SECTION 7: THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT

The Ralph M. Brown Act (the Brown Act) is intended to facilitate public participation in local government decisions and imposes an “open meeting” requirement on local legislative bodies. Among its many provisions, the Brown Act ensures that public decisions are deliberated on and made in public, at noticed meetings, in which the public can participate. Counties are committed to ensuring the public’s right to access public meetings and scrutinize the decisions of public officials.

Recognizing the clear benefits of open meetings, CSAC supports efforts that maximize local control and flexibility while maintaining transparency and accountability under the following framework.

- The people must retain “the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people’s business, and, therefore, the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny,” as granted by the state constitution.
- State law should allow counties to design local rules regarding the safe and efficient use of remote meeting options by elected and appointed officials and members of the public in order to promote greater participation, reduce travel barriers, reduce transportation emissions, and increase equity and inclusion. Remote participation might require different rules or limitations than in-person participation.

- Local legislative bodies should be able under the law to effectively manage meetings so that they can constructively accomplish the people’s business while meeting the intent of the state’s open meeting laws.
- Public meetings should be safe, accessible, and welcoming environments where community members can peaceably assemble and attend the people’s business without being threatened, harassed, or subjected to unacceptably disruptive behavior.
- The requirements of the Brown Act for local open meetings should not be more stringent than the requirements of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act for the state’s open meetings.

Section 8: The California Public Records Act

The California Public Records is part of the bedrock of transparency laws enshrining the public’s rights to hold their governments accountable. Counties believe the act is a vital component of maintaining trust in government institutions. Counties also believe in the importance of advancing policies that strike a more appropriate balance between the public’s right to access records and the needs of local governments to preserve local resources for all members of the communities they serve. Changes to the public records act over the past decade have expanded the public’s access to records while diminishing tools available to local governments to respond to the fiscal pressures brought by public records requests.

To that end, counties support public records act reform that:

- Allows counties to recover more of the costs of responding to requests that are expensive and consume significant resources;
- Consider the unique needs of journalists, academics, non-profits, and intergovernmental interests in accessing records, particularly in comparison to commercial or legal interests;
- Appropriately balance the public’s right to access information and the needs of the government in providing services for all residents in their communities; and
- Help agencies avoid public records act lawsuits.



The California County Platform | Chapter 6 Health Services

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

Section 1: General Principles

Counties are charged with protecting Californians against threats of widespread disease and illness and are tasked with promoting health and wellness equitably across all populations in California. This chapter deals specifically with health services and covers the major segments of counties' functions in health services. Health services in each county relate to the needs of residents within that county in a systematic manner without limitation to the availability of hospital(s) or other specific methods of service delivery. The board of supervisors in each county generally sets the standards of care for their residents.

Local health needs vary greatly from county to county. Counties support and encourage the use of multi-jurisdictional approaches to health service delivery. Counties support efforts to create cost-saving partnerships between the state and the counties, and other partners to improve health outcomes and health equity. Therefore, counties should have the maximum amount of flexibility in managing programs. Counties should have the ability to expand or consolidate facilities, services, and program contracts to provide a comprehensive level of service and accountability, access for all populations, and maximum cost effectiveness. Additionally, as new federal and state programs are designed in the field of health services, the state must work with counties to encourage maximum program flexibility and minimize disruptions in county funding, from the transition phase to new reimbursement mechanisms and outcome development and assessment. Further, any policy or operational changes at the federal or state level resulting in additional programmatic and/or fiscal pressures on local governments must be accompanied by adequate resources and funding to counties.

Counties also support a continuum of preventative health efforts – including communicable disease control, chronic disease, and injury and violence prevention – and the inclusion of public health in the design and planning of healthy communities. Counties also support efforts to prevent and treat substance use and mental health disorders. Preventative health efforts have proven to be cost effective, avert crisis and suffering, and provide a benefit to all residents. Some counties operate their own public hospitals and clinics, which provide a wide range of services to patients who are uninsured or eligible for Medi-Cal, and also provide training for the physician workforce.

Federal health reform efforts, including the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, provide new challenges, as well as opportunities, for counties. Counties, as providers, administrators, and employers, are deeply involved with health care delivery at all levels and must be full partners with the state and federal governments to expand Medicaid and provide health insurance and access to care. Counties believe in maximizing the allowable coverage for their residents in accordance with eligibility criteria, while also preserving access to local health services for the remaining uninsured. Counties remain committed to serving as an integral part of any effort to improve or reform California's health system.

At the federal level, counties also support economic stimulus efforts that help maintain and improve service levels and access to care for the state's neediest residents, regardless of an extenuating circumstance such as an emergency or disaster. Counties strongly urge that any federal stimulus funding, enhanced matching funds, or innovation grants that include a county share of cost be allocated directly to each county that qualifies.

Section 2: Public Health

County health departments and agencies are responsible for protecting, assessing and assuring individual, community and environmental health. Public health agencies are tasked with preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases through immunizations, surveillance, disease investigations, laboratory testing and planning, preparedness, and response activities. Furthermore, county health agencies are tasked with evaluating the health needs of their communities and play a vital role in chronic disease and injury prevention through outreach and education, data collection, policy, system, and environmental changes promoting healthier communities.

Additionally, county health departments are charged with responding to public health emergencies, ranging from terrorist and bioterrorist attacks to natural disasters, emerging infectious diseases, and weather-related incidents, including maintaining and bolstering the necessary infrastructure – such as laboratories, medical supply, and prescription drug caches, as well as trained personnel – needed to protect our residents.

Further, county health departments are also working to reduce health inequities and disparities with efforts to eliminate barriers to good health and health care, and supporting the equitable distribution of resources necessary for the health of California’s diverse population, including underserved communities. Strategies include addressing the social determinants of health by working with other sectors to maintain and expand affordable, safe, and stable housing; ensuring a health equity lens is applied to economic and social policies to identify and address unintended consequences and potential effects on vulnerable populations, and disproportionately impacted communities; and collecting, analyzing, and sharing information in a manner that protects privacy to understand and address the health impacts of racism, discrimination, and bias.

While counties are appreciative of recent investments in public health, counties continue to be concerned about the lack of funding, including the lack of flexibility in funding, planning, and ongoing support for critical public health infrastructure. Additionally, counties are currently facing severe workforce capacity challenges as well as staff retention, and challenges to recruit highly skilled, trained public health staff; these challenges become exacerbated when new public health crises emerge. The state and federal governments must work with counties and provide funding and technical assistance in a timely manner to ensure adequate planning, medical supplies, access to laboratory testing services, workforce and alternative care capacity to appropriately respond to any local, state, or global health emergency.

- 1) To effectively respond to these local needs, counties must have adequate, sustained funding for local public health communicable disease control, epidemiological surveillance, chronic disease and injury prevention, emergency preparedness, planning and response activities and public health infrastructure. Counties must also have state and federal support in growing and retaining a highly skilled public health workforce.
- 2) Counties support the preservation of the federal Prevention and Public Health Fund for public health activities and oppose any efforts to decrease its funding. Counties support efforts to secure direct funding for counties to meet the goals of the Fund.
- 3) Counties believe strongly in comprehensive health services planning. Planning must be done through locally elected officials, both directly and by the appointment of quality individuals to serve in policy- and decision-making positions for health services planning efforts. Counties must also retain the authority and flexibility to make health policy and fiscal decisions at the local level

to meet the needs of their communities.

Section 3: Behavioral Health

Counties provide a full continuum of community-based prevention and treatment services for individuals living with mental illness and with substance use disorders (SUD). Counties have the responsibility for providing care, treatment and administration of specialty mental health and substance use disorder programs for low-income Californians as specialty mental health plans under Medi-Cal. In addition, the realignment of health and social services programs in 1991 restructured California's public behavioral health system. Realignment required local responsibility for program design and delivery within statewide standards of eligibility and scope of services, and designated revenues to support those programs to the extent that resources are available. Under realignment, counties may provide a broad range of behavioral health prevention and treatment services to all Californians across all payors, including the uninsured, provided the county has sufficient resources. Counties must have the flexibility to design and implement behavioral health services that best meet the needs of their local communities. The appropriate treatment of people living with substance use and serious mental health disorders should be provided equitably and within the framework of local, state, and federal criteria.

Counties have developed a range of locally designed programs to serve California's diverse population, and must retain local authority and flexibility. Counties use dedicated state revenues, including 1991 Realignment, 2011 Realignment, and Mental Health Services Act funds to finance both the non-federal share of Medi-Cal entitlement responsibilities, as well as the broader behavioral health safety net. At the same time, the state must ensure that counties have adequate funding to continue and evaluate such services and are provided with additional funding when new programs are created to ensure existing funds are not redirected, resulting in reduced access or quality of care.

Individuals with behavioral health needs are overrepresented in the justice system, and therefore, increased access to behavioral health services may also reduce justice involvement among individuals with behavioral health conditions, as well as lower criminal justice costs and recidivism through prevention, diversion, and reentry services for individuals who have behavioral health conditions. The state, counties, and other organizations must collaborate to ensure adequate resources for addressing the complex needs of individuals involved in or at risk of being involved in the criminal justice system who also live with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

The state must acknowledge the critical role of counties in responding to emergencies, natural disasters and states of emergencies and the need for disaster response trauma-related behavioral health services.

Proposition 1: Behavioral Health Services Act and the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act

The approval of Proposition 1 by the voters in March 2024 results in significant policy and system reforms to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), which was approved by the voters in 2004 under Proposition 63 to assist counties in mental health service delivery to the public. MHSA was intended to provide new funding through a one percent income tax on personal income in excess of \$1 million per year to expand and improve the capacity of county behavioral health systems of care and provide opportunities to fund initiatives not otherwise funded via Medicaid, such as infrastructure, workforce, prevention, the "whatever it takes" model of care, and community-led innovations. MHSA funding was also dedicated to meeting the needs of each community via robust stakeholder input to determine spending priorities.

Proposition 1 consists of two main components that make statutory changes to reform the state's county behavioral health system that redirects a portion of MHSAs and provides one-time resources to develop supportive housing and establish more state-directed behavioral health treatment resources:

- Among its provisions, Proposition 1 renames the MHSAs to the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), revises how counties may spend BHSA revenue by allowing the funds to be used for substance use disorders, and prioritizes funding for housing for those with the most severe needs, including the chronically homeless with significant behavioral health challenges, and establishes additional oversight and accountability measures, including increased state direction of BHSA funds. Notably, the measure shifts funds that currently support county mental health services and adds new funding priorities. Prevention and workforce funding will also be shifted from counties to the state.
- Authorizes \$6.38 billion in general obligation bonds to finance the conversion, rehabilitation, and construction of supportive housing and behavioral health housing and treatment settings. Of the total, \$1.5 billion is to be awarded through grants exclusively to counties, cities, and tribal entities; and local jurisdictions are not precluded from applying for additional funds.

Just as under the MHSAs, the BHSA continues to be crucial to the stability of the Medi-Cal behavioral health safety net as counties expertly leverage available BHSA funding to provide critical Medi-Cal specialty mental health services annually. Under the BHSA reforms, counties will be required to increase their focus on Medi-Cal billing with BHSA funds and to seek out contracts with all commercial health plans in the state, as well as leverage funding through the Managed Care Plans. Counties value the partnerships with a broad and diverse set of local community stakeholders that will be integral to implementing changes to the county planning process to develop priorities which address local needs. The BHSA requires county integrated plans to be developed every three years with over 20 local stakeholder groups including managed care plans (MCPs), labor representative organizations, and continuums of care, among others.

- 1) Counties support state funding as statutorily required for all new and ongoing county and county behavioral health agency administrative costs incurred in the implementation of Proposition 1, including but not limited to new and increased planning and reporting activities, aligning county behavioral health plans and managed care plan contract requirements, and increased costs for integrated plan development and improving plan operations.
- 2) Counties support the partnership with the state in the development of critical policies to implement Proposition 1. Counties support the flexibilities afforded by the statutorily authorized funding transfers and exemptions outlined in Proposition 1. The process and criteria for authorized funding shifts and county exemptions should be as flexible as possible to account for county variability, as well as unknown and unforeseen circumstances. Further, established timelines should be reasonable and sensitive to county budget cycles, and exemptions should be applied easily and appropriately per the issues/limitations being managed in all counties.
- 3) Counties support as much flexibility as possible in the policy development of eligible uses of the "Housing Interventions" category of funds to ensure the needs of county behavioral health clients are prioritized and to avoid inadvertently creating new

challenges for counties in attempting to house their most vulnerable and medically complex clients.

- 4) Counties oppose additional reductions in state funding for behavioral health services that will result in the shifting of state or federal costs to counties or require counties to use BHSAs funds for that purpose. These cost shifts result in reduced services available at the local level and disrupt treatment capacity and options for behavioral health clients. Any shift in responsibility or funding must hold counties fiscally harmless and provide the authority to tailor behavioral health programs to individual community needs consistent with the Act.
- 5) Counties also strongly oppose any efforts to redirect BHSAs funding to new or existing state programs and services, or removing local control over funding decisions as intended by the voters. With the shift of MHSAs funding to the state for workforce and prevention initiatives, counties believe that diverted BHSAs funding should flow to counties whenever possible to fund prevention and treatment efforts.
- 6) MHSAs funds were diverted in the past due to economic challenges and the establishment of the No Place Like Home Program in 2016. Any further diversions of funding under BHSAs will require robust county engagement, keeping the needs of local communities at the forefront without disruption to current programming at the local level.
- 7) Counties support timely and clear reporting standards, including reversion timelines, for BHSAs expenditures and seek guidance from the Department of Health Care Services through robust county stakeholder engagement on all reporting standards, deadlines, and formats. Any development or update to reporting should be clearly established with county stakeholder involvement. Further, updates should be data-driven, measurable, tied to areas of county behavioral health resourcing and responsibility, and reassessed for effectiveness at specified intervals.
- 8) Counties support the fiscal integrity of the BHSAs and transparency in stakeholder input, distributions, spending, reporting, and reversions, and seek collaboration with the state on developing tools that accurately report on BHSAs programs and expenditures and align with current county budgeting processes.
- 9) Counties support the development of recommended solutions to reduce BHSAs revenue volatility and establish appropriate prudent reserve levels to support the sustainability of county programs and services. County participation on the BHSAs Revenue Stability Workgroup is critical to assessing revenue volatility and providing county input on the recommendations for the report to be submitted to the Legislature and Governor's Office.
- 10) Counties support the involvement of local agencies in the planning and implementation of population wide and population specific based prevention and workforce development activities that have been designated as state-administered activities under Proposition 1, and recognize the expertise across county agencies and departments in these areas.

- 11) Counties support guidance and technical assistance with stakeholder input and community planning as it is expanded to all behavioral health funding sources.
- 12) Counties oppose the imposition of sanctions, such as corrective action plans, monetary sanctions, or the temporarily withhold of payment to counties for issues/circumstances that are unreasonable or fall outside of a county's control. Any sanctions policy should include a timely appeals process and reasonable time to cure and/or to come into compliance.
- 13) Counties support the expeditious distribution of bond funds under the BHIBA. Counties support the opportunities BHIBA provides to finance the conversion, rehabilitation, and construction of supportive housing and behavioral health housing and treatment settings that are so critically needed. However, counties also acknowledge concerns regarding the sustainability of maintenance and operations in the absence of ongoing support, as well as the workforce recruitment and retention challenges that will take time to address.
- 14) Counties support the investment of additional start-up funding to assist with the transition from the MHSA to the BHSA including funding to support the conversion of MHSA only providers to Medi-Cal certified providers, and funding to build out the necessary treatment and other infrastructure needed to realize the vision of the BHSA.

County Specialty Behavioral Health Plans

Counties are committed to service delivery that manages and coordinates services to persons with behavioral health needs and that operates within a system of performance outcomes which assures funds are spent in a manner that provides access to the highest quality of care for all residents. County specialty behavioral health plans must adapt to new models, lead collaborative efforts, and receive adequate and sustainable resources for the next era of behavioral health care.

Counties assumed the role of Medi-Cal specialty plans for behavioral health when they supported the consolidation of what were then two distinct Medi-Cal behavioral health systems: one operated by county behavioral health departments and the other operated by the state Department of Health Care Services into a single Medi-Cal Mental Health services managed care plan at the local level that operates separately, or is "carved-out," of Medi-Cal managed care. California counties subsequently developed the first in the nation Section 1115 Medicaid waiver to deliver substance use disorder services through a managed care model under the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System waiver program. There is a negotiated sharing of risk for services between the state and counties, particularly because counties became solely responsible for managing the nonfederal share of cost for all Medicaid specialty behavioral health services under 2011 Realignment.

- 1) Counties recognize that access to high quality prevention and treatment services for children, adolescents and young adults with behavioral health needs can be improved, and support fiscally viable strategies for building a more comprehensive continuum of care including inpatient and residential treatment services and placement in facilities preferably within the county of residence, for this vulnerable

age group.

- 2) Counties support technical assistance for counties and providers to ensure timely and accurate coding and billing, as well as compliance with quality and service requirements. Responsibility for billing errors, code errors, or other billing oversights must be shared by the state, counties, and any applicable providers. In addition, counties rely on state and federal audits and urge they be completed in a timely manner to ensure counties have the opportunity to correct errors before subsequent audits.
- 3) The state must ensure that Medi-Cal specialty behavioral health plans are adequately resourced to meet the Medi-Cal entitlement.
- 4) Counties seek partnership with the state to seek opportunities to maximize federal financial participation under Medi-Cal for the full array of county behavioral health services necessary to encourage and support voluntary services in the least restrictive setting when possible.
- 5) Counties continue to support state and federal efforts to provide behavioral health benefits under the same terms and conditions as other health services and welcome collaboration with public and private partners to achieve behavioral health parity.
- 6) Counties support strengthening the behavioral health system by ensuring substance use disorder services and the workforce are more equitably financed, supported, and recognized.
- 7) Counties support and seek sustained funding and state investments in the expansion of appropriate and available housing options for people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders along the entire continuum of care, including for board and care facilities, recovery-oriented and treatment housing options within the community, as well as residential treatment services. This includes start-up funding to support the build out of flexible spending pools for housing interventions funded under Medi-Cal.
- 8) Counties support more robust state funding to expand treatment options for individuals with substance use disorders.
- 9) Counties support cross-sector, multi-jurisdictional collaboration to promote prevention and education on substance use disorders, and mental health conditions, and to prevent suicide, overdoses, and disparities in mortality for individuals with behavioral health conditions.
- 10) Counties support local control and decision-making authority in oversight of local behavioral health crisis services to support the rollout of 988 and the expanded Medi-Cal mobile crisis benefit. Counties support efforts to ensure funding for crisis services which are not reimbursed through Medi-Cal, including services to individuals with private insurance.
- 11) The courts may refer individuals to counties for treatment by court order, for example

under the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act, but counties are increasingly unable to provide judge-mandated services without adequate and dedicated state funding.

- 12) Counties urge the state to prioritize coordination and alignment with county-based systems of care when funding new mental health and substance use disorder initiatives, such as the CARE Act, and to include counties in opportunities for supplemental or flexible funding for behavioral health services. Funding behavioral health services in a fragmented or siloed manner is unlikely to promote access or quality.
- 13) Counties support ongoing funding for new and expanded CARE Act requirements imposed on counties, including but not limited to activities not otherwise reimbursable through public or private insurance.
- 14) Counties support the integration of county behavioral health plans and providers in the state's efforts to promote a health information exchange with adequate funding, including through additional investments in behavioral health provider capacity to effectuate participation.
- 15) Counties support state funding to implement any new or expanded requirements on county behavioral health agencies imposed through legislative, regulatory, or initiative measures.

Section 4: Public Guardians/Administrators/Conservators

Public Administrators, Public Guardians and Public Conservators are appointed and act under the authority granted by the California Superior Court, and serve as a safety net for the most vulnerable populations, older and dependent adults, and those with serious and persistent mental health disorders and/or severe substance use disorders, and their estates. These services are solely a county function and funded with local county funds. The recent rise in interest in conservatorships as a vehicle to help manage justice-involved and homeless populations also places significant fiscal and workload pressure on county guardians and conservators.

- 1) Counties support the acquisition of additional and sustainable non-county resources for public guardians, conservators, and administrators to ensure quality safety-net services for all who qualify. Any proposal from the Administration or Legislature to expand the responsibility of county public conservators of Lanterman-Petris-Short Act (LPS) "gravely disabled" conservatees or probate conservatees must come with additional funding and time for the system to build the necessary treatment and workforce capacity necessary to safely and effectively treat and manage the expanded population.
- 2) Counties oppose additional duties, mandates, and requirements for public guardians, conservators, and administrators, and county behavioral health, without the provision of adequate new funding to carry out these services.
- 3) Counties urge the state to coordinate with counties to ensure alignment with county-based

systems of care when imposing new requirements or providing new funding for local Public Guardian and Public Conservator or related county behavioral health LPS treatment services.

- 4) CSAC will work to support placement capacity for county behavioral health and public guardians, conservators, and administrators as California severely lacks safe and secure housing for the majority of residents under conservatorship. This includes supporting efforts to acquire additional resources for any new or revised facility licensure standards, as well as licensed adult residential facilities and residential care facilities for the elderly and subacute facilities.
- 5) Counties support state funding for the development of additional new treatment facility types and capacity to support the needs of individuals who fall under the new grave disability standard related to necessary medical care.

Section 5: Children's Health

California Children's Services

Counties administer the California Children's Services (CCS) program on behalf of and in partnership with the state, a program providing diagnostic, treatment, therapy, and case management services to children with certain serious and complex medical conditions. Counties also provide Medical Therapy Program (MTP) services for CCS children at public school sites.

Under the CCS Whole Child Model (WCM) initiative, operating in counties with a County Organized Health Systems (COHS) model, responsibility for service authorization and case management services transferred from counties to local managed care plans. In 2024, DHCS introduced an alternate health care service plan in multiple counties, requiring county CCS programs to work with a second health plan in administering the CCS program. Whole Child Model counties retain responsibility for case management for the CCS State-Only population, determination of residential, medical, and financial eligibility for the program, and MTP services. As of January 2025, thirty-three counties will operate under the CCS WCM.

DHCS is launching the CCS County Monitoring & Oversight Initiative, effective July 2025, to establish statewide performance, quality, and monitoring for county administration of the CCS program. The initiative requires county CCS programs to comply with a series of new requirements, including those related to grievances, training, reporting and surveys, and corrective action and enforcement.

- 1) Counties support efforts to ensure adequate funding for the CCS program, including for county administration and case management services. Maximum federal and state matching funds for the California Children's Services program must continue to avoid the shifting of costs to counties. Counties cannot continue to bear the rapidly increasing costs associated with both program growth and eroding state support.
- 2) Counties support efforts to test alternative models of care under pilot programs. Counties also support efforts to implement operational and administrative improvements in the CCS program, including those related to budgeting and fiscal activities, state guidance, and program procedures.

- 3) Counties seek to ensure these high-need patients continue to receive timely access to quality care, and there are no disruptions in care. In addition, counties must be adequately resourced to provide services to children and youth who remain the county's responsibility.
- 4) Counties seek to ensure new initiatives imposed by the state on CCS programs accurately reflect the county's role in CCS and that counties are adequately resourced to comply with the policies and standards that are applied.

State Children's Health Insurance Program

- 1) CSAC supports sustained funding for the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP/Healthy Families). In 2018, the CHIP program was reauthorized through 2023. However, the federal match rate decreases over time during this period and limits the requirement to provide coverage for children in families with income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. Without federal funding, some families risk losing coverage for their children if their income is too high to qualify for Medicaid/Medical and too low to purchase family coverage.

Proposition 10: The First 5 Children and Families Commissions

In November 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, the "Children and Families Act of 1998" initiative, which created the 58 First 5 county commissions across the state. The Act levies a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products and provides funding for early childhood development programs and mandates that commissions work across systems to integrate service delivery and promote optimal childhood development.

First 5 Children and Families Commissions believe that every child deserves to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed in school and life. Based on extensive research, First 5 promotes the importance of collective impact to support children and families from the earliest moments possible. This prevention framework leads to improved child health and development outcomes, increased school success, and over time increases economic benefit across all public systems.

- 1) Counties oppose any effort to diminish First 5 funding, lower or eliminate state support for county programs with the expectation that the state or local First 5 commissions will backfill the loss with Proposition 10 revenues. Due to the declining nature of tobacco tax revenues, counties support the inclusion of existing tobacco taxes, including Proposition 10, in any subsequent tobacco tax proposal.
- 2) Counties support identifying new ongoing and sustainable funding for First 5 programs, as well as prioritizing coordination and alignment with county-based systems of care and existing First 5 services and initiatives for any new funding.
- 3) Counties oppose any effort to restrict local First 5 expenditure authority. First 5 commissions must maintain the necessary flexibility to direct these resources address the greatest needs of communities surrounding family resiliency, comprehensive health and development, quality early learning, and systems sustainability and scale.

Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care

Counties administer the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPCFC), which operates as a standalone program upon the sunset of the Child Health and Disability Prevention Program as of June 30, 2024. HCPCFC provides public health nurse consultation, oversight, and complex case management services to address the medical, dental, behavioral, and developmental needs of foster children and youth statewide.

Counties support programmatic flexibility to structure and staff their standalone HCPCFC programs to best meet local needs of foster children and youth. Counties also support efforts to ensure standalone HCPCFC programs are sufficiently funded and leverage existing county expertise in providing services and supports to this vulnerable population.

Section 6: Medi-Cal: California's Medicaid Program

California counties have a unique perspective on the state's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal. Counties are charged with preserving the health and safety of communities; they also operate health plans, provide direct services, operate public hospitals and clinics, specialize in care for patients with complex social needs, conduct eligibility for benefits, provide indigent medical care, and bear a significant amount of risk for financing the program. As the safety net and jurisdiction charged with protecting the public's health, counties are vitally concerned about health outcomes. Undoubtedly, changes to the Medi-Cal program, including efforts to integrate and coordinate care for Medi-Cal enrollees, will affect all counties.

- 1) Counties remain concerned about state, federal and local partner proposals that would decrease access to health care or shift costs and risk for Medicaid services to counties.
- 2) Any Medi-Cal reform that results in decreased access to or funding of county hospitals and health systems will be devastating to the safety net and the patients counties serve. The loss of Medi-Cal funds translates into fewer dollars to operate our facilities and deliver care to all persons served by county facilities. Counties are not in a position to absorb or backfill the loss of state and federal funds. Rural counties already have particular difficulty developing and maintaining health care infrastructure and ensuring access to services. Counties support Medi-Cal payment reforms that result in increased payments and state General Fund.
- 3) Counties support the continued role of county welfare departments in Medi-Cal eligibility, enrollment, outreach, and retention functions. The state should fully fund county costs for the administration of the Medi-Cal program, and consult with counties on all policy, operational, and technological changes in the administration of the program. Further, enhanced data matching and case management of these enrollees must include adequate funding and be administered at the local level.
- 4) County behavioral health departments provide Medi-Cal Managed Care Specialty Mental Health Services, and must receive adequate funding for these critical services and new sustainable funding for additional responsibilities.
- 5) It is vital that changes to Medi-Cal preserve the viability and innovations of the local safety net and not shift additional costs to counties. Counties support efforts to address unnecessary

complexity and risk through behavioral health payment reform with the goal of ensuring additional efficiencies and reducing administrative workload. Counties support state funding to ensure counties do not shoulder additional costs in implementing payment reform.

- 6) Counties oppose any efforts to decrease funding for or reverse expansions to the Medi-Cal program, which will eliminate coverage for consumers and shift the responsibility of these individuals with healthcare needs from the Medi-Cal program to counties, which are required to provide services to the medically indigent.
- 7) The state should continue to provide options for counties to implement managed care systems that meet local needs. The state should work openly and collaboratively with counties as primary partners in this endeavor and allow counties a role in managed care plan selection.
- 8) The state needs to recognize county experience with geographic managed care and make strong efforts to ensure the sustainability of county organized health systems. The Medi-Cal program must offer a reasonable reimbursement and rate mechanism for local managed care systems which should help ensure sufficient health plan participation and expand the number of providers serving Medi-Cal participants.
- 9) Changes to Medi-Cal must preserve access to medically necessary behavioral health care and drug treatment services.
- 10) Efforts to better integrate services in Medi-Cal care delivery must consider the unique role of county behavioral health as specialty plans for beneficiaries with serious mental illness and substance use disorders, and preserve federal funding available to county behavioral health to continue the effective delivery of community-based mental health services to local Medi-Cal enrollees.
- 11) Counties recognize the need to continue to innovate under the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System Waiver program in ways that maximize federal funds, ensure access to medically necessary evidence-based practices, allow counties to retain authority and choice in contracting with accredited providers, and minimize county fiscal risks. Counties support sustained state investment to ensure statewide implementation of the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System.
- 12) Counties support the pursuit of a new Serious Mental Illness/Serious Emotional Disturbance Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) waiver to allow counties to secure additional federal funding under Medi-Cal for mental health inpatient and residential treatment stays and support maximum local control on how to reinvest savings to improve access to outpatient treatment and reduce the need for inpatient levels of care in the long term.
- 13) Any Medi-Cal reform effort must recognize the importance of substance use disorder treatment and services in the local health care continuum, as well as the evidence of good outcomes under integrated care models.
- 14) Counties will not accept a share of cost to locally support the Medi-Cal program for federal or state-only expansion of services. Counties also believe that Medi-Cal long-term care must remain a state-funded program and oppose any cost shifts or attempts to increase county responsibility through block grants or other means.

- 15) The state should fully fund county costs associated with the local administration of the Medi-Cal program.
- 16) Complexities of rules and requirements should be minimized or reduced so that enrollment, retention and documentation and reporting requirements are not unnecessarily burdensome to recipients, providers, and administrators and are no more restrictive or duplicative than required by federal law.
- 17) The state should consider counties as full partners in the administration of Medi-Cal and new Medi-Cal initiatives such as CalAIM. The state should prioritize and fund counties – including through adequate reimbursement rates for CalAIM services – to provide services that leverage our existing expertise and consult with counties in formulating and implementing all policy, operational, and technological changes.
- 18) Any statewide efforts at improving and increasing data sharing infrastructure and data integration across platforms must also include robust technical assistance, adequate funding, and consultation with counties and relevant stakeholders.

Medicare Part D

Medicare Part D led to an increase in workload for case management across many levels of county medical, social welfare, criminal justice, and behavioral health systems.

- 1) Counties strongly oppose any change to realignment funding that may result and would oppose any reduction or shifting of costs associated with this benefit that would require a greater mandate on counties.

Medicaid and Aging Issues

- 1) Counties support reliable funding for programs that affect older and dependent adults, such as Adult Protective Services (APS) and In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), and oppose any funding cuts, or shifts of costs to counties without revenue, from either the state or federal governments. Please see the Human Services Chapter of the CSAC Platform for more details on APS and IHSS.
- 2) Counties support efforts to prevent, identify, and prosecute instances of elder and dependent adult abuse.
- 3) Counties support investments of new state and federal resources to support the APS workforce and enhance the direct services available to victims of abuse and neglect.
- 4) Counties are committed to addressing the unique needs of older and dependent adults in their communities, and support collaborative efforts to build a continuum of services as part of a long-term system of care for this vulnerable but vibrant population.
- 5) Counties support federal and state funding to support Alzheimer's disease and

dementia research, community education and outreach, respite care, and resources for caregivers, family members and those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

- 6) Counties support legislative efforts coupled with adequate funding to prevent homelessness among at-risk older adults and people with disabilities.
- 7) Counties support funding for the full range of aging programs that provide services to older adults including services provided by Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), senior nutrition programs, meal delivery programs, caregiver supports, resource centers, ombudsman programs, and home and community-based supports.
- 8) Counties should maintain flexibility and control to determine locally the AAA administrative structure that works best in their communities for delivering aging services.

Section 7: Health Reform Efforts

Counties support affordable, comprehensive health care coverage for all persons living in the state. The sequence of changes and implementation of federal or state healthcare reform efforts must be carefully planned, and the state must work in partnership with counties to successfully realize any gains in health care access and delivery and possible cost increases or decreases.

Under AB 85 (Chapter 24, Statutes of 2013), counties must also retain sufficient health realignment revenues for residual responsibilities, including existing Medi-Cal non-federal share responsibilities to care for the remaining uninsured, and public health. Any changes to AB 85 must also allow counties to retain sufficient health realignment revenues for these residual responsibilities and future needs.

- 1) Counties support offering a truly comprehensive package of health services that includes mental health and substance use disorder treatment services and trauma-informed care at parity levels and a strong prevention component and incentives.
- 2) Counties support the integration of health care services for justice-involved individuals of county and state correctional institutions, detainees, and undocumented immigrants into the larger health care service model.
- 3) Health reform efforts must address access to health care in rural communities and other underserved areas and include incentives and remedies, including telehealth and consideration of other innovative access and delivery methods, to meet these needs as quickly as possible.
- 4) Counties strongly support maintaining a stable and viable health care safety net with adequate funding.
- 5) The current safety net is grossly underfunded compared to the actual cost of doing business at the local level. Any diversion of funds away from existing safety net services will lead to the dismantling of the health care safety net and will hurt access to care for all Californians.
- 6) Counties believe that delivery systems that meet the needs of vulnerable populations and provide

extensive primary, specialty and tertiary care –are essential providers. Their education, training and ongoing work must be supported in any health care reform effort.

- 7) Counties strongly support adequate funding for the local public health infrastructure as part of a plan to reform health care and achieve universal health coverage. A strong local public health infrastructure can help reduce medical care costs, assist patients in managing chronic disease, reduce health inequities, and address disaster preparedness and response.
- 8) Counties support access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage through a combination of mechanisms that may include improvements in and expansion of the publicly funded health programs, increased employer-based and individual coverage through purchasing pools, tax incentives, and system restructuring. The costs of universal health care and health care reform shall be shared among all sectors: government, labor, and business.
- 9) Health reform efforts, including efforts to achieve universal health care, should simplify the health care system – for consumers, providers, and overall administration. Any efforts to reform the health care system should include prudent utilization control mechanisms that are appropriate and do not create barriers to necessary care.
- 10) The federal government has an obligation and responsibility to assist in the provision of funding of health care coverage.
- 11) Counties encourage the state to pursue ways to maximize federal financial participation in health care expansion efforts, and to take full advantage of opportunities to simplify Medi-Cal, and other publicly funded programs with the goal of achieving maximum enrollment and provider participation.
- 12) County financial resources are currently overburdened; counties are not in a position to contribute permanent additional resources to expand or integrate health care coverage. Counties support grant and other direct funding opportunities with streamlined application processes, as well as tracking and reporting requirements that are not overly burdensome.
- 13) Counties strongly encourage public health and equity as key components to any health care coverage expansion. Public health prevention activities in addition to access to health education, preventive care, and early diagnosis and treatment will assist in controlling costs through improved health outcomes. Health equity efforts will increase access to health care for underserved populations and improve the overall health of our communities.
- 14) Counties, as both employers and administrators of health care programs, recognize that, under the current system in the United States every employer has an obligation to contribute to health care coverage, and counties advocate that such an employer policy should also be pursued at the federal level and be consistent with the goals and principles of local control at the county government level.
- 15) Reforms of health care coverage should offer opportunities for self-employed individuals, temporary workers, and contract workers to obtain affordable quality health coverage.

Section 8: California Health Services Financing

- 1) Those eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), should retain their categorical linkage to Medi-Cal.
- 2) Counties are concerned about the erosion of state program funding and the inability of counties to sustain current program levels. As a result, we strongly oppose additional cuts in county administrative programs as well as any attempts by the state to shift the costs for these programs to counties. With respect to the County Medical Services Program (CMSP), counties support efforts to improve program cost effectiveness and oppose state efforts to shift costs to participating counties, including administrative costs and elimination of other state contributions to the program. Due to the unique characteristics of each county's delivery system, health care accessibility, and demographics of client population, counties believe that managed care systems must be tailored to each county's needs, and that counties should have the opportunity to choose providers that best meet the needs of their populations. Where cost-effective, the state and counties should provide non-emergency health services to undocumented immigrants and together seek federal and other reimbursement for medical services provided to undocumented immigrants.
- 3) Counties support the continued use of federal Medicaid funds for emergency services for undocumented immigrants. Counties support increased funding for trauma and emergency room services overall.
- 4) Although reducing the number of uninsured through expanded health care coverage will help reduce the financial losses to trauma centers and emergency rooms, critical health care safety-net services must be supported to ensure their long-term viability.

Realignment

- 1) Counties believe the integrity of realignment should be protected. Counties also strongly oppose any change to realignment funding that would negatively impact counties fiscally or administratively.
- 2) Counties remain concerned and will resist any reduction of dedicated realignment revenues or the shifting of new costs from the state, or further mandates requiring new and greater fiscal responsibilities for counties in this partnership program.
- 3) Any effort to realign additional programs must occur in the context of Proposition 1A constitutional provisions and must guarantee that counties have sufficient revenues for residual responsibilities, including public health programs.
- 4) In 2011, counties assumed fiscal responsibility for Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT); Drug Medi-Cal; drug courts; perinatal treatment programs; and women's and children's residential treatment services as part of the 2011 Public Safety Realignment. Please see the Realignment Chapter of the CSAC Platform and accompanying principles.
- 5) Counties bear significant responsibility for financing the non-federal share of Medi-Cal services in county public health and behavioral health systems. They also continue to have responsibility for uninsured services.

Hospital Financing

Public hospitals and health systems are a vital piece of the local safety net, and serve as indispensable components of a robust health system, providing primary, specialty, and acute health services, as well as physician training, trauma centers, and burn care. California's public hospitals provide a significant portion of the state's non-federal share in the Medi-Cal program, and these local expenditures are made at the sole discretion of the county supervisors.

- 1) Counties have been firm that any proposal to change hospital Medicaid financing must guarantee that county hospitals do not receive less funding than they currently do, and are eligible for more federal and state funding in the future as needs grow and challenges arise.
- 2) Counties strongly support the continuation of robust and innovative Medicaid Section 1115 and 1915(b) waivers to ensure that county hospitals are paid for the safety net care they provide to Medi-Cal recipients and uninsured patients and have the ability to innovate and improve access to care.
- 3) As California moves away from large Medicaid waivers that county public hospitals have relied on for critical funding, funding levels must be preserved and strengthened through other vehicles.
- 4) Counties also support opportunities for county public hospitals and health systems to make delivery system improvements, including improving care coordination, which will help ensure the provision of high quality, accessible care to all patients they serve.
- 5) Counties support proposals to preserve supplemental payments to public and private hospitals. Any loss of federal funds through changes to waiver agreements or federal regulations must identify other fiscal opportunities and support to ensure the continued viability of the safety net.
- 6) Counties support increased financing for public hospitals and health systems that does not require counties to put up the non-federal share nor result in reductions to other county services or supports.

Section 9: Violence Prevention

CSAC remains committed to raising awareness of the toll of violence – in particular, family violence and cases of ongoing control and abuses of power, hate crimes, and violence against women, children, the elderly, and other marginalized groups – on families and communities by supporting efforts that target violence prevention, reporting, investigation, intervention, and treatment. Specific strategies for prevention and early intervention should be developed through cooperation between state and local governments, as well as community and private organizations, taking into account that violence adversely impacts all Californians, particularly those in disadvantaged communities at disproportionate rates, and that these impacts have long-term and wide-ranging health and economic consequences. CSAC also supports efforts to build safe communities, use data-informed approaches, pursue trauma-informed care, and work with key partners to implement violence prevention strategies.

Section 10: Healthy Communities

Built and social environments significantly impact the health of communities. Counties support public policies and programs that aid in the development of healthy communities including food and beverage policies that increase access to healthier food in both county-operated and non-county-operated food programs. Counties support the concept of joint use of facilities and partnerships, mixed-use developments and walkable and safe developments, to promote healthy community events and activities.

Additionally, counties support efforts and funding to develop climate change mitigation and resiliency strategies, including but not limited to bolstering infrastructure, to help protect against and address potential impacts on human health such as increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and premature deaths related to extreme weather events, including catastrophic wildfires, changes in the prevalence and geographic distribution of food- and water-borne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and threats to mental health, particularly for disadvantaged communities that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Please see the Climate Change Chapter of the CSAC Platform for more details.

Section 11: Veterans

Specific strategies for intervention and service delivery to veterans should be developed through cooperation between federal, state and local governments, as well as community and private organizations serving veterans.

Counties support coordination of services for veterans among all entities that serve this population, especially in housing, treatment, and employment training.

Section 12: Emergency Medical Services

- 1) Counties do not intend to infringe upon the service areas of other levels of government who provide similar services, but will continue to discharge our statutory duties to ensure that all county residents have access to the appropriate level and quality of emergency services, including medically indigent adults.
- 2) Counties support ensuring the continuity and integrity of the current emergency medical services system, including county authority related to medical control, specialty center designations, and alternative destination efforts.
- 3) Counties recognize that effective administration and oversight of local emergency medical services systems includes input from key stakeholders, such as other local governments, private providers, state officials, local boards and commissions, and the people in our communities who depend on these critical services.
- 4) Counties support maintaining the authority and governing role of counties and their local emergency medical services agencies to plan, implement, and evaluate all aspects and components of the local Emergency Medical Services system.
- 5) Counties oppose efforts that would weaken the local authority of local medical services agencies or lead to system fragmentation, inequitable service, and patient safety issues.

Section 13: Justice-Involved Population

Counties recognize the importance of enrolling the justice-involved population into Medi-Cal and other public programs. Medi-Cal enrollment provides access to important behavioral health, substance use, and primary care services that will improve health outcomes and may reduce recidivism. CSAC continues to look for partnership opportunities with the Department of Health Care Services, foundations, and other stakeholders on enrollment, eligibility, quality, and improving outcomes for this population. Counties are supportive of obtaining federal Medicaid funds for health and behavioral health services, other jail in-reach services received at local detention centers, and inpatient hospitalizations, including psychiatric hospitalizations, for adults and juveniles while they are incarcerated.

Section 14: Incompetent to Stand Trial

Counties affirm the authority of County Public Guardians under current law to conduct conservatorship investigations and are mindful of the potential costs and ramifications of additional mandates or duties in this area.

Counties support collaboration among the California Department of State Hospitals (DSH), county public guardians, behavioral health departments, and county sheriffs to find secure placements for individuals originating from DSH facilities, county jails, or who are under conservatorship. Counties support a shared funding and service delivery model for complex placements, such as the Enhanced Treatment Program. Counties oppose efforts to shift financial and other liability and risk for state DSH responsibilities to counties, and support partnering with the state in ensuring that diversion and community-based restoration services are adequately resourced and supported while retaining access to state hospitals for the most high-risk individuals.

Counties recognize the need for state support in establishing additional secure placement options for adults and juveniles who are conserved or involved in the local or state criminal justice systems, both with capital facility investments and by eliminating statutory and administrative barriers to create local flexibility. While existing provisions allow for competency restoration to occur in community settings or in locked sub-acute care facilities (IMDs, mental health rehabilitation centers) the lack of secure placement options across the state and the federal IMD exclusion from Medicaid limit options to provide treatment for IST individuals. Counties support efforts to expand both funding and options to provide treatment and care, including but not limited to seeking a waiver for the IMD exclusion.

Section 15: Homelessness

Given the growing magnitude of California's homelessness crisis, CSAC reinstated the Homelessness Action Team in 2022 to develop guiding principles on homelessness. These *Homelessness Principles* were approved by the CSAC Board of Directors on September 1, 2022, were utilized to develop the AT HOME Plan that was released in March 2023, and will guide advocacy efforts around homelessness policies, investments, and proposals. The principles outline the need for a statewide plan, call for multi-level partnerships and collaboration while recognizing the need for clear lines of responsibility across all levels of government, detail the importance of building enough housing, and highlight how critical sustained and flexible state funding is to making progress.



**The California County Platform | Chapter 7
Planning, Land Use, and Housing**

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

General-purpose local government performs the dominant role in the planning, development, conservation, and environmental review processes. Within this context, it is essential that the appropriate levels of responsibility at the various levels of government be understood and more clearly defined. These roles at the state, regional, county, and city level contain elements of mutual concern; however, the level of jurisdiction, the scale of the problem/issue, available funding and the beneficiaries of the effort require distinct and separate treatment.

The following policies attempt to capture these distinctions and are intended to assist government at all levels to identify its role, pick up its share of the responsibility, and refrain from interfering with the details of how other agencies carry out their responsibility.

The housing needs throughout the state, lack of revenue, and controversial planning law in the area of housing have resulted in the need for new focus on housing planning law. Housing principles are identified and included under a separate heading in this section.

Counties are charged with comprehensive planning for future growth, the management of natural resources, and the provision of a variety of public services both within the unincorporated and incorporated areas.

Although Agriculture and Natural Resources are in this Platform as a separate chapter, there is a correlation between Planning and Land Use, and Agriculture and Natural Resources (Chapter Three). These two chapters are to be viewed together on matters where the subject matter warrants.

Additionally, climate change and the release of greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere have the potential to dramatically impact our environment, land use, public health, and our economy. Due to relationship between climate change and other issues, this chapter also should be viewed in conjunction with Chapter Fourteen that outlines CSAC's climate change policy.

- 1) Counties have and must retain a primary responsibility for basic land use decisions.
- 2) Counties are cognizant of the need for resource conservation and development, maintaining our economic and social well being, protecting the environment, and guiding orderly population growth and property development.

- 3) Counties are responsible for preparing plans and implementing programs to address land use, transportation, housing, open space, conservation, air quality, water supply/distribution and quality, solid waste, and liquid waste, among other issues.
- 4) Counties play a major role in facilitating inter-jurisdictional cooperation between all levels of government to achieve the balanced attainment of these objectives.
- 5) Counties must have sufficient funding from state sources to meet state mandated planning programs.
- 6) Counties define local planning needs based on local conditions and constraints.

SECTION 2: THE COUNTY ROLE IN LAND USE

General Plans and Development

Counties should protect vital resources and sensitive environments from overuse and exploitation. General and specific plans are policy documents that are adopted, administered, and implemented at the local level. State guidelines can serve as standards to ensure uniformity of method and procedure, but should not mandate substantive or policy content. Land use and development problems and their solutions differ from one area to another and require careful analysis, evaluation, and appraisal at the local government level. Local government is the best level of government to solve such problems equitably, economically and effectively. Further, it is important that other public agencies, (e.g., federal, state, regional, cities, schools, or special districts) participate in the local general planning process to avoid conflicts with future local decisions that are consistent with the general plan.

- 1) State requirements for general plan adoption should be limited to major planning issues and general plan mandates should include the preparation of planning elements only when appropriate given the specific characteristics, goals, and needs of each county.
- 2) Zoning and other implementation techniques should be a logical consequence to well considered and locally certified plans.
- 3) Counties support a general plan judicial review process which first requires exhaustion of remedies before the Board of Supervisors, with judicial review confined to a reasonable statute of limitations and limited to matters directly related to the initial hearing record. Counties also support retaining the current judicial standard whereby the courts defer to the judgment of the local agency when that judgment is supported by substantial evidence in the record.
- 4) Policy development and implementation should include meaningful public participation, full disclosure, and wide dissemination in advance of adoption.

Public Facilities and Service

Counties have a vital role in ensuring that municipal services and public facilities are provided to residents in the unincorporated area in an efficient manner.

- 1) Within the framework of the general plan, counties should protect the integrity and efficiency of newly developing unincorporated areas and urban cores by supporting thoughtful development in areas with existing services and readily available infrastructure.
- 2) Counties should accept responsibility for community services in newly developing unincorporated areas where no other appropriate entity exists.
- 3) In the absence of feasible incorporation, County Service Areas or Community Service Districts are appropriate entities to provide needed services for urbanizing areas. They work against proliferation of single purpose districts, allow counties to charge the actual user for the service, permit direct control by the Board of Supervisors, and set the basis of reformation of multi-purpose districts.
- 4) County authority to require land and/or in-lieu fees to provide public facilities in the amount needed to serve new development must be protected.

Environmental Analysis

The environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides essential information to be constructively used in local decision-making processes. Unfortunately, the CEQA process is too often used as a legal tool to delay or stop reasonable development projects.

The CEQA process and requirements should be simplified wherever possible including the preparation of master environmental documents and use of tiered environmental impact reports (EIRs) and negative declarations, including Climate Action Plans, and associated environmental impact reports for tiering under CEQA. The state should adopt statutory exemptions from environmental review for certain projects that align with Housing, Transportation Climate and Resiliency Goals the goals of counties of the state.

- 1) The length of environmental reports should be minimized without impairing the quality of these reports.
- 2) Other public agencies (federal, state, regional, affected local jurisdictions, special districts, etc.) should participate in the environmental review process for plans and projects to provide a thorough review and analysis up front and avoid conflicts in future discretionary actions.

- 3) Counties should continue to assume lead agency roles where projects are proposed in unincorporated territory requiring discretionary action by the county and other jurisdictions.
- 4) CEQA documents should include economic and social data when applicable; however, this data should not be made mandatory.

Coastal Development

Preservation, protection, and enhancement of the California coastline is the planning responsibility of each county and city with shoreline within its boundaries. Planning regulation and control of land use are the implementation tools of county government whenever a resource is used or threatened.

Counties within the Coastal Zone are also subject to the California Coastal Act which is implemented via cooperative agreements between the California Coastal Commission and counties and cities. Most development in the Coastal Zone requires a coastal development permit issued by local agencies with a certified Local Coastal Plan (LCP) or by the Commission in the absence of a cooperative agreement. LCPs link statewide coastal policies to local planning efforts with the goal of protecting the quality and environment of California's coastline.

- 1) Counties are committed to preserve and provide access to the coast and support where appropriate beach activities, boating activities, and other recreational uses in developing and implementing precise coastal plans and appropriate zoning.
- 2) Comprehensive coastal plans should also include preservation of open space, development of commercial and recreational small craft harbor facilities, accessible camping facilities, quality water access, and commercial and industrial uses.
- 3) Local jurisdictions must have the statutory and legal authority to implement coastline programs. Statewide efforts related to the California coastline must respect local land use authority. The state should collaboratively and cooperatively work with counties and cities to ensure decisions do not erode local control and decision-making.
- 4) The State, counties, and cities should mutually encourage, seek, and support efforts to streamline, improve, and modernize coastal development permit and local coastal planning processes, without compromising or undermining the original intent and tenets of these laws.
- 5) Counties support measures to streamline the process for approving and amending Local Coastal Programs (LCPs).
 - a. Measures should re-prioritize Commission staff and resources to the early scoping phase of any proposed amendment, to help identify key issues early on.

- b. Measures should identify standard timelines for each stage of the amendment process and develop specific procedures/mechanisms for adhering to those timelines, and should also require clearly identified reasons for any extensions requested by Commission staff.
- 6) The California Coastal Commission should work with local jurisdictions with regard to the sea level rise within Local Coastal Programs Planning Assistance (LCPA) guidelines.
- 7) Counties support legislative funding options that will enhance efficiency and accountability in the local coastal planning process.

Open Space Lands

Counties support open space policy that sets forth the local government's intent to preserve open space lands and ensures that local government will be responsible for conserving natural resources and developing and implementing open space plans and programs. Counties need state policies and fiscal resources to fully implement open space plans.

- 1) Counties support additional revenues for local open space acquisition programs, such as the subvention funds formerly provided by the Williamson Act.
- 2) Counties support reimbursement to local agencies for property tax losses.
- 3) Counties support greater use of land exchange powers for transfer of development rights.
- 4) Counties support protection of current agricultural production lands through the purchasing of development rights.
- 5) In some cases, open space easements should be created and used by local jurisdictions to implement open space programs, like the Williamson Act program.
- 6) Timber preserve zones and timber harvesting rules should balance the needs of protecting this long-term renewable resource while addressing the wildfire risks forest lands present. See AENR CH. 3, Section 2 for more information on CSAC's forest lands policy.

Healthy Communities

Counties support policies and programs that aid in the development of healthy communities which are designed to provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to engage in routine daily physical activity.

- 1) Counties support promoting active living via bicycle- and pedestrian-oriented design.

- 2) Counties support mixed-use development, providing recreation facilities, and siting schools in walkable communities.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- 1) Counties support policies and programs that ensure environmental justice by providing information and raising awareness on a number of environmental issues, such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, water quality, noise, and heavy industrial uses.
- 2) Counties support environmental justice by providing sufficient services and infrastructure; protecting and conserving open space, natural and resource areas, and making them accessible; preventing and minimizing pollution impacts.
- 3) Counties support environmental justice by facilitating stakeholder participation in planning efforts.

SECTION 3: STATE ROLE IN LAND USE

Local government recognizes that state government has a legitimate interest in proper land use planning and utilization of those lands which are of critical statewide concern.

- 1) The state interest shall be statutorily and precisely defined and strictly limited to those lands designated to be critical statewide concern in concert with attainable and specified state goals and policies.
- 2) In determining those lands of crucial statewide concern, a mechanism should be created which ensures significant local involvement through a meaningful state/local relationship.
- 3) The state should prepare a statewide plan that reconciles the conflicts between the various state plans and objectives to provide local governments with greater certainty in areas of statewide concern. This is not intended to expand the State's authority over land use decisions; rather it should clarify the state's intent in relation to capital projects of statewide significance.
- 4) The state's participation in land use decisions in those designated areas shall be strictly limited to ensuring the defined state interest is protected at the local level.
- 5) Any regulatory activity necessary to protect the state's interest, as defined in statute, shall be carried out by local government.

- 6) Counties' enforcement procedures for violations of zoning and building ordinances should not be hampered by State established maximum fines that in some cases do not serve as a deterrent.
- 7) Climate change is a programmatic issue of statewide concern that requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each level of government as well as the state's interest in land use decisions to ensure statewide climate change goals are met. Population growth in the state is inevitable, thus climate change strategies will affect land use decisions to accommodate and mitigate the expected growth in the state.
- 8) Local government, as the chief land use decision-maker and integral part of the housing planning process, must have a clearly defined role and be supported with the resources to achieve the State's climate change goals.
- 9) Adequate financial resources shall be provided, before a state-mandate is activated, to ensure local government can carry out state-mandated planning requirements.

SECTION 4: REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Counties support voluntary participation within regional agencies as appropriate to resolve regional problems throughout the State. Regional approaches to planning and resolution to issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries are increasingly important. While California's growth rate has slowed since the boom in the 1980's, the State will still see significant population gains over the next 50-years with the total population projected to reach 52.7 million by 2060. Within that same time frame, 13 counties will have one million or more residents and six of those counties will have a population of two million or more residents.

Regional agencies in California play an important role in the allocation of regional housing need numbers, programming of Federal and State transportation dollars, in addressing air quality non-attainment problems, and climate change to name a few. Regional collaboration remains important to address issues associated with growth in California, such as revenue equity issues, service responsibilities, a seamless and efficient transportation network, reducing GHGs and tackling climate change, job creation, housing, agricultural and resource protection, and open space designation.

- 1) The passage of SB 375 in 2008 and the preparation of regional Sustainable Communities Strategies in most of the State's regions elevate the importance of regional collaboration. Regional agencies must make genuine and substantive efforts to include local governments in their regional planning efforts.

- 2) While planning at the regional scale is increasingly important, land use decisions shall remain the exclusive province of cities and counties based on state planning and zoning law and the police powers granted to them under the State Constitution.
- 3) Cities and counties are responsible for a vast infrastructure system, which requires that cities and counties continue to receive direct allocations of revenues to maintain, operate and expand a variety of public facilities and buildings under their jurisdiction. As an example, cities and counties own and operate 81 percent of the state's publicly maintained road miles, thus must retain direct allocations of transportation dollars to address the needs of this critical network and protect the public's existing investment.
- 4) Regional approaches to tax sharing and other financial agreements are appropriate and often necessary to address service needs of future populations; however, cities and counties must maintain financial independence and continue to receive discretionary and program dollars directly.
- 5) Counties support voluntary revenue-sharing agreements for existing revenues at the regional level, and any mandated revenue sharing must be limited to new revenues.
- 6) Regional agencies must consider financial incentives for cities and counties that have resource areas or farmland instead of (or in addition to) high growth areas. For example, such incentives should address transportation investments for the preservation and safety of city and county road systems, farm to market transportation, and interconnectivity of transportation needs.
- 7) Regional agencies should also consider financial assistance to address countywide service responsibilities in counties that contribute towards the GHG emissions reductions targets by implementing policies that promote growth within their cities and existing urbanized areas.

SECTION 5: SPECIAL DISTRICTS

In recent years, Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) have been generally successful at regulating incorporations, annexations, and the formation of new special districts. However, the state has a legacy of a large number of independent special districts that leads to fragmentation of local government.

- 1) Counties find that there are many fully justified districts that properly serve the purpose for which they were created. However, there are districts whose existence is no longer "defensible."
- 2) Counties find that nothing is served by rhetorically attacking "fragmentation."

- 3) LAFCOs should retain the authority to evaluate special districts to test their value to the community for whom they were initially formed to serve and identify those districts that no longer serve the purposes for which they were created.

SECTION 6: HOUSING

Housing is an important element of economic development and essential for the health and well being of our communities. The responsibility to meet the state's housing needs must be borne by all levels of government and the private sector. Reductions in state and federal funding and the loss of redevelopment housing set aside funding create a need for new funding sources to support the development of affordable housing. Moreover, reforms are needed to address the current property and sales tax systems in California, which can work against housing affordability by providing fiscal disincentives for additional housing development.

Counties support the following principles in relation to housing. These principles must be taken as a whole, recognizing the importance of their interdependence. These principles provide a comprehensive approach to address the production of housing, recognizing the role of counties, which is to encourage and facilitate the production of housing. They should not be misinterpreted to hold counties responsible for the actual production of housing; instead, they should recognize the need for various interests to cooperatively strive to provide affordable housing that is accessible and available to meet the needs of California residents at all income levels and in all geographic areas.

State Role in Housing Planning

- 1) CSAC supports a role by the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) that focuses on assisting local governments in financing efforts and advising them on planning policies--both of which strive to meet the state's housing needs.
- 2) HCD's role should focus on facilitating the production of housing, rather than an onerous and unpredictable housing element compliance process that detracts from local governments' efforts to seek funding and actually facilitate housing production.
- 3) CSAC supports locally driven plans that seek to implement broad state goals allowing for the development of homes affordable to households at all income levels.
- 4) While CSAC generally opposes direct state intervention in local zoning, state laws that streamline the housing development process must also provide opportunities for counties to meet their housing element planning requirements more easily.

Housing Element Reform

- 1) A sweeping reform of the current housing element requirements should be undertaken to streamline and simplify existing housing element law.

- 2) The housing element should place a greater emphasis on obtaining financing and enabling production, rather than the overly detailed data analysis now required under state law.
- 3) Housing element reform should provide local governments with the flexibility and creativity to adopt local housing elements, comprehensive housing assistance strategies, and other local plans and programs that will be effective in their communities.
- 4) Housing element reform should conserve state and local resources by promoting predictable HCD review consistent with statutory requirements, including transparent standards that are uniformly applied and includes timelines for comment periods and decision-making.
- 5) Housing element reform must consider the unique characteristics of unincorporated communities, including the limited availability of infrastructure to support urban development, limited transit services, and policies to protect agricultural lands and open space.
- 6) Housing element reform should allow counties to obtain RHNA credits for their resource participation in the creation of affordable housing within their incorporated jurisdiction.
- 7) Housing element reform must consider natural resources issues, including exposure to natural hazards and availability of resources to support new growth, especially in rural, unincorporated areas, and reflect solutions that address the risk and needs without stifling needed housing production.

Affordable Housing Funding

- 1) Counties support identifying and generating a variety of permanent financing resources and subsidy mechanisms for affordable housing, including a statewide permanent source for affordable housing.
- 2) These sources need to be developed to address California's housing needs, particularly with the reduction of federal and state contributions in recent years. The elimination of redevelopment in 2012 redirected most public funds previously dedicated to affordable housing development and preservation, as it ended all future receipts of affordable housing set-aside funds, as well as recapturing many millions of dollars in housing funds that had been received in prior years.
- 3) The need for new affordable housing units exceeds the number of new units for which financing and subsidies will be available each year. Therefore, additional funding is necessary to ensure production of new subsidized units, and adequate funds for housing subsidies to households.

- 4) Policies should be established to encourage continued flow of capital to market rate and affordable housing ownership to assure an adequate supply of low-cost, low-down payment mortgage financing for first-time and qualified buyers.
- 5) A need exists to educate the private building and financial communities on the opportunities that exist with the affordable housing submarket to encourage new investments.
- 6) Establish and adequately fund federal and state tax incentives for the provision of affordable housing. The tax codes and financial industry regulations need to be revised to provide stimulus to produce affordable housing, particularly for state moderate, median, low, and very low-income households. Counties support expansion of existing tax credit programs to better allow local governments to meet statewide goals for the development of affordable homes.
- 7) The state should develop an incentive structure to support counties who make progress towards meeting their state allocated housing goals.

Restructure Local Government Funding to Support Housing Affordability

The current property and sales tax systems in California are not supportive of housing development and work against housing affordability because housing is not viewed as a "fiscal winner" by local governments as they make land use and policy decisions.

- 1) Local government finance should be restructured at the state level to improve the attractiveness and feasibility of affordable housing development at the local level.
- 2) At a minimum, there should be better mechanisms to allow and encourage local governments to share tax revenues.

Promote a Full Range of Housing in All Communities

- 1) Local governments, builders, the real estate industry, financial institutions, and other concerned stakeholders should recognize their joint opportunities to encourage a full range of housing and should work together to achieve this goal.
- 2) Promoting a full range of housing will require cooperative effort from the beginning of the planning and approval process.
- 3) CSAC supports creatively applying incentives and development standards, minimizing regulations, and generating adequate financing to make housing more affordable and available to all income groups.

- 4) CSAC supports reforms that facilitate the ability of counties to provide for the construction and financing of affordable housing, including the repeal of constitutional limitations on the ability of local government to financially support affordable housing without voter approval.

SECTION 7: HOMELESSNESS

Given the growing magnitude of California’s homelessness crisis, CSAC reinstated the Homelessness Action Team in 2022 to develop guiding principles on homelessness. These *Homelessness Principles* were approved by the CSAC Board of Directors on September 1, 2022, were utilized to develop the AT HOME Plan that was released in March 2023, and will guide advocacy efforts around homelessness policies, investments, and proposals. The principles outline the need for a statewide plan, call for multi-level partnerships and collaboration while recognizing the need for clear lines of responsibility across all levels of government, detail the importance of building enough housing, and highlight how critical sustained and flexible state funding is to making progress.



The California County Platform | Chapter 8 Public Employment and Retirement

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

SECTION 1: PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Counties are committed to an employment system that provides public employees with protection against arbitrary and capricious loss of jobs, unfair hiring practices, and preferential promotions or job assignments that are not merit-based. Counties believe in, and support, merit systems that promote equity and equality among its employees and applicants. For this purpose, they have provided personnel services, grievance procedures, health and safety protection, retirement, and pension plans. Foremost, however, counties have a fundamental obligation to all citizens to exercise the peoples' sovereign power in determining what government will do, at what cost to the taxpayer, and under what circumstances. Thus, the basic principle of county employer-employee relations is one of balancing the legitimate desires and needs of employees against the public's right to economical, efficient, effective, and stable government.

Collective Bargaining

CSAC supports collective bargaining legislation that:

- 1) Recognizes the right of each employee to join or not join organizations and bargain collectively or individually.
- 2) Recognizes the responsibility of local elected officials to govern and manage the organization and to implement public policy.
- 3) Minimizes the potential for disputes arising purely from procedural matters.
- 4) Provides an acceptable method of resolving impasse resulting from negotiations. CSAC opposes compulsory, binding arbitration.

Political Activity by Employees

Employees whose job security is protected by civil service or merit systems or by agreement between the county and an employee organization cannot be permitted to engage in any political activity during times when they are paid to perform the duties of their employment.

Nepotism Restriction

CSAC supports nepotism restriction policies that are consistent with applicable state statutes. Specifically, CSAC supports policies that prohibit employment of immediate family members by county officers, or participation of county officers or employees in employment decisions affecting immediate family members. No person should be employed in a position where that

position will be directly supervised by a member of the immediate family, or where it is reasonable to believe, and it can be shown, that employment of immediate family members in the same department, division, or facility involves potential conflicts of interest.

Employee Benefits Legislation

Counties strive to develop employee benefit plans that are affordable, responsive to the needs and desires of county employees, and reflect the values of the community. CSAC is opposed to the state legislating salary, wages, or employee benefits for county employees. These issues must be determined only at the local bargaining table; otherwise, the foundation of the collective bargaining process is undermined.

Workers' Compensation

CSAC supports preserving the original intent of the Workers' Compensation Act and legislation that would prevent or correct abuses within the system. We believe that timely and unprejudiced benefits should be provided to employees who suffer from work-related injuries or illnesses at a reasonable cost to county employers. CSAC opposes state policy that would erode the original intent of the Workers' Compensation Act or result in excessive costs and increased litigation to county employers.

CSAC supports workers' compensation legislation that:

- 1) Provides reasonable measures to assist employees in returning to suitable employment.
- 2) Promotes medical care treatment guidelines that are based on evidentiary medicine and designed to cure or relieve the effects of employment-related injury or illness.
- 3) Supports the concept of apportionment for disability that is the result of other industrial or non-industrial injuries or conditions.
- 4) Maintains objectivity in evaluating permanent disability standards.
- 5) Promotes the concept that tax exemptions on temporary disability should extend only to the statutory maximum.
- 6) Ensures that the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board remains a forum for efficient resolution of claim issues.

CSAC Opposes:

- 1) Extending workers' compensation benefits to any person other than the employee, as defined by law, except in the case of dependent death benefits.
- 2) Expanding injury presumptions without data-driven evidence that the existing system is

unjust.

- 3) Changing the system in ways that could increase fraud, abuse, or unqualified claims.

Coordination of Governmental Employers

Counties, cities, and local governmental management are strongly encouraged to freely and timely exchange information on employee demands over wages and employee benefits as well as settlements reached. In this manner, each employer can deal more effectively with its own "meet and confer" process.

While multi-employer bargaining may not currently occur, there are many real benefits available if governmental units kept adjoining and comparable agencies promptly informed of employer positions on salaries, employee demands, and employee benefits. Governmental entities are regularly used to compare employee benefits, sometimes at an "anticipated" rather than actual level.

Closed Sessions for Negotiation Discussions

Successful negotiations depend upon meaningful discussions at the bargaining table. Under no circumstances should closed sessions of the Board of Supervisors and its designated management representatives be required to be opened to the public.

Federal Labor Relations Legislation

CSAC opposes the intrusion of the federal government into the field of state and local public labor relations legislation. States and counties should be innovative with new legislative approaches and adopt procedures tailored to meet the needs of their constituents.

However, should federal labor relations legislation become inevitable, counties should encourage the adoption of legislation that parallels their positions on state legislation.

SECTION 2: PUBLIC RETIREMENT

Public retirement systems should be established and maintained on actuarially sound principles and be fiscally responsible. Public pension reform has garnered widespread interest and has generated significant debate among policy leaders about the appropriate remedy for actual and perceived abuse, rising costs, and accountability to taxpayers. CSAC welcomes this discussion and approaches the concept of reform with the overarching goal of maintaining public trust in public pension systems and empowering local elected officials to exercise sound fiduciary management of pension systems, as well as maintaining a retirement benefit sufficient to assure recruitment and retention of a competent local government workforce. The guiding principles are intended to apply to new public employees in both the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 (1937 Act) retirement systems.

Local elected officials should be able to develop pension systems that meet the needs of their workforce, maintain principles of sound fiduciary management, and preserve their ability to recruit and retain quality employees for key positions that frequently pay less than comparable positions in the private sector. We oppose efforts to remove the authority of boards of supervisors to determine retirement benefits since they are responsible for funding benefit changes. For the 1937 Act county retirement system, we are opposed to any legislation that would transfer authority now vested with the county board of supervisors to the county board of retirement. Such proposed transfers could include, but are not limited to, the adoption of salaries for retirement board members or employees, the extension of benefits, or decisions related to funding the system.

Public pension systems boards have a constitutional duty to:

- 1) Protect the administration of the system to ensure benefits are available to members; and,
- 2) Minimize employer costs.

The constitutional provisions and state statutes governing such boards should promote responsible financial management, discourage conflicts of interest, and eliminate fraud or abuse to ensure public trust and to preserve the overall public value of these systems.

Public pensions should adhere to the following principles:

- 1) Protect Local Control and Flexibility
 - a. Local elected officials should be able to develop pension systems that meet the needs of their workforce, maintain principles of sound fiduciary management, and preserve their ability to recruit and retain quality employees for key positions that frequently pay less than comparable positions in the private sector. A statewide mandated retirement system is neither appropriate nor practical, given the diversity and varying needs of California's communities. Further, a mandated defined contribution retirement system could force a reconsideration of the decision of local governments not to participate in Social Security.
- 2) Eliminate Abuse
 - a. Any fraud or abuse must be eliminated to maintain the public trust and to preserve the overall public value of these systems.
- 3) Reduce and Contain Cost
 - a. Public pension reform should provide for cost relief for government, public employees, and taxpayers.

- 4) Increase Predictability of Costs and Benefits for Employee and Employer
 - a. Responsible financial planning requires predictability. Employers must be able to predict, and therefore budget for, their financial obligations in future years. Employees should have the security of an appropriate and predictable level of income for their retirement after a career in public service.

- 5) Strengthen Local Control to Develop Plans with Equitable Sharing of Costs and Risks Between Employee and Employer
 - a. Equitable sharing of pension costs and risks promotes shared responsibility for the financial health of pension systems and reduces the incentive for either employees or employers to advocate changes that result in disproportionate costs to the other party, while diminishing the exclusive impact on employers for costs resulting from increases in unfunded liability.

- 6) Increase Pension System Accountability
 - a. Public pension systems boards have a constitutional duty to both protect administration of the system to ensure benefits are available to members and minimize employer costs. The constitutional provisions and state statutes governing such boards should promote responsible financial management and discourage conflicts of interest.

SECTION 3: INDUSTRIAL DISABILITY RETIREMENT (IDR)

CSAC has traditionally supported the principle of provision of IDR to safety employees who are unable to continue their safety employment due to a bona fide job-connected disabling injury or illness. CSAC has also traditionally recognized that IDR can be extremely expensive, and that responsible reforms may be warranted to limit the cost to legitimate claims.

SECTION 4: OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH STANDARDS

The occupational safety and health standards and practices for counties should comply with California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) regulations.

Safety Member Classification

The safety member classification is intended to provide a retirement system for the class or classes of public employees whose duties consist of physically active functions in the protection and safety of the public. The purpose of such classification is to ensure that persons so employed will be agile and active and possess a high degree of physical alertness and stamina, and it is designed to provide an opportunity for career employment and, at the same time, provide for and ensure separation from such service without financial hardship at a normal retirement age that is a younger age than other employees. The term "safety," as used in the retirement law, refers to the safety of the public. Personal risk or the hazardous nature

of job functions are not elements of the classification and shall have no bearing in determining the establishment of or eligibility for safety membership.

Coordination of Personnel Functions with Central Administration

CSAC recognizes the successes and failures of local government rest heavily on the quality of its personnel, and, therefore, supports the close organizational ties between the central administration and the personnel function. Counties are encouraged to establish and maintain effective partnerships between the central administration and the personnel functions and to link activities related to those functions.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The California State Association of Counties is committed to the concept of equal employment opportunity (EEO) in public service as a basic merit system principle. Acceptance of this principle does not end with mere prohibition of discriminatory practices. We recognize the obligation of counties to develop practical plans for specific steps to be taken to achieve more fully the goal of equal employment opportunity in county government. This includes positive efforts in recruitment, examination, selection, promotion, pay, job restructuring, and due process protection so that appropriate numbers of protected group members achieve positions in county government and are provided training and promotional opportunities at all job classification levels.

Testing, Selection, and Promotion

Counties believe initial selection and promotional assessments used should eliminate artificial barriers, be job-related, and help ensure future job success. Special consideration should be given to facilitate the transfer and promotion of qualified employees and the full utilization of human resources particularly in protected classes.

Licensing and Certification

Counties urge a review of all requirements for licenses or certificates for county employment to ensure they are reasonably and realistically related to job performance. Counties should strive to prevent requirements within licenses or certificates when those requirements create artificial barriers to employment and/or upward mobility.

State Duplication of Federal Law and Reporting Requirements

CSAC is opposed to the adoption of state laws that duplicate, are inconsistent, or conflict with federal law or regulations.

Counties are greatly concerned with the multitude of varying EEO reporting requirements coming from the state and federal government. The time required to gather and report EEO data from the many different state and federal agencies, each requiring its own data, greatly reduces the time available to accomplish the objective of EEO. Counties urge state and federal government reporting requirements that are reasonably and realistically related to necessary monitoring and evaluation activities.

CSAC supports the consolidation and integration of federal agencies with responsibilities for the monitoring, auditing, or regulating of local affirmative action plans and activities. The federal government should initiate efforts to increase standardization and uniformity of their practices in these areas.

SECTION 5: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CSAC recognizes and endorses the principles of prime sponsorship and accountability of county officials in the planning, administration, and supervision of comprehensive local systems of workforce development, training, and employment--with minimal federal regulation.



The California County Platform | Chapter 9

Financing County Services

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

California counties are the unit of government best suited to deliver public assistance, public protection, and some public works services, but counties have limited ability to adequately finance these responsibilities. In order to meet each community's unique needs, counties must be given greater financial independence from the state and federal budget processes, including the authority to collect revenues at a level sufficient to provide the degree of local services the community desires. Counties will seek a level of financial independence that provides for the conduct of governmental programs and services, especially discretionary programs and services, at an adequate level.

SECTION 1: STATE POLICY OBJECTIVES

Program Realignment

Reforms of county finances need to involve agreement between the state and the counties on a realignment of responsibilities to provide social services, income maintenance, health care, justice services, or any other service that the county is best suited to provide. Counties must be given realistic and adequate revenue sources to pay for ongoing program and service responsibilities. The CSAC Realignment Principles appear in the Realignment chapter within this Platform.

Financial Independence

Counties have neither the financial resources to both operate state programs and also meet local needs, nor the ability to predict service levels beyond each legislative session. Therefore, counties advocate for aligning revenue authority with service responsibility and also support other measures that grant counties financial independence.

- 1) **Protection of Local Government Revenues:** Counties strongly support the provisions of Proposition 1A (2004), which provides constitutional protection of local governments' property tax, sales tax, and Vehicle License Fee revenues. It also requires the Legislature to fully fund or else suspend reimbursable local mandates.
- 2) **Mandate Funding:** Counties continue to advocate for guaranteed state appropriations of sufficient funds prior to requiring counties to provide new or increased services. (Also see Chapter XII: STATE MANDATE LEGISLATION.) Counties also seek a guarantee that programs and services that are funded wholly or partially by the state will annually

receive full adjustments for the increased cost of providing them, including inflation and population changes.

- 3) State Borrowing of Property Tax Revenues: Counties will firmly oppose any attempt by the state to borrow property tax revenue from counties under the provisions of Proposition 1A. Such borrowing would cause counties increased costs in several areas, including the cost of borrowing and lost investment income. Furthermore, borrowing to cover ongoing state costs is fiscally unwise and would put negative pressure on state funding of county-provided services in the out-years.
- 4) Local Authority: Counties should be granted enhanced local revenue-generating authority to respond to unique circumstances in each county to provide needed infrastructure and county services. Any revenue-raising actions that require approval by the electorate should require a simple majority vote.
- 5) Furthermore, counties should have the ability to adjust all fees, assessments, and charges to cover the full costs of the services they support.
- 6) State Payments: Counties seek a guarantee that the state will pay reimbursements and subventions promptly, with interest paid to counties when it fails to do so.

Existing Revenue Sources

- 1) Property Tax Revenue: Counties oppose erosion of the property tax base through unreimbursed exemptions to property taxes. The state should recognize that property tax revenues are a significant source of county discretionary funds. Any subventions to counties based on property tax losses through state action should be adjusted for inflation annually.
- 2) Property Tax Administration: Counties incur significant costs in administering the property tax system and in maintaining financial records for other government entities and jurisdictions and should receive full reimbursement from all recipients – proportional to their benefit – for actual administrative costs upon distribution of property tax proceeds.
- 3) 1991 Realignment: In 1991, the state and counties entered into a new fiscal relationship known as realignment. Realignment affects health, mental health, and social services programs and their funding. The state transferred control of certain programs to counties, altered program cost-sharing ratios, and provided counties with dedicated tax revenues from the sales tax and vehicle license fee to pay for these changes. Counties support the full continuation of all dedicated realignment revenues. Counties also urge the state to pay counties for the full, current, actual costs of administering programs on its behalf, which is currently frozen at 2001 levels.

- 4) Incorporation, Annexation, and Dissolution: Counties support the provisions of revenue neutrality and encourage enhancements and improvements to new city incorporation law. Property tax transfers resulting from municipal incorporations, annexations, or dissolutions should be generally negotiated.

Sales Tax Distribution and Exemptions

- 1) Distributions: Any distribution formula for new sales tax revenue growth should not be limited to a situs-only distribution. Other options for distribution of new sales tax revenue growth should be fully explored.
- 2) Sales Tax Exemption: Counties oppose unreimbursed sales tax exemptions enacted by the state, including exemptions of the local portion and state portions dedicated to counties for county-administered services

Efficient Government

The state should facilitate the efficient use of taxpayers' dollars by:

- 1) Streamlining or eliminating unnecessary planning, reporting, and administrative requirements in state-county partnership programs.
- 2) Reducing or eliminating regulations designed to control the implementation of state-mandated programs and services.
- 3) Granting counties greater flexibility to manage county programs more efficiently and effectively and tailor them to a community's individual needs.
- 4) Allowing counties to use the least costly methods of providing services while meeting operational needs.

Equal Treatment

The allocation of new financial resources or needed reductions should treat all counties equally, based on service needs.

Counties should engage in ongoing efforts to discuss and negotiate equitable resolutions of conflicts between counties and other units of local government.

Aligning Revenue Authority with Service Responsibility

The passage of Proposition 13 and implementing legislative and judicial decisions, along with myriad other actions since, have eliminated most connections between the payment of taxes and the benefits received by the individual or business taxpayer. Counties support aligning revenue authority with the level of government responsible for providing services.

Master Settlement Agreement

Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state, California counties receive forty percent of proceeds from the Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and a number of states. The MOU specifies that these funds are discretionary. Counties oppose any effort to diminish their share of the tobacco settlement or to impose restrictions on its expenditure. Additionally, counties oppose any effort to lower or eliminate the state's support for programs with the expectation that counties will backfill the loss with tobacco settlement revenue.

SECTION 2: FEDERAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

Adequate compensation must be made available to local governments to offset the costs of providing services as federal law requires. Additionally, any revenue sharing or payment in lieu of taxes should be equitable, predictable, and sustainable.

Basic Service Levels

The federal government should finance a basic level of health, social service, and income maintenance services, including resultant county administrative costs. It must provide flexibility to adjust to local needs and circumstances and ensure long-term program planning and stability.

Adequately Finance Specific Program Objectives

Federal efforts to address certain domestic needs as partners with counties must adequately provide for county administrative costs, provide flexibility to adjust to local needs and circumstances, provide for long-term program planning, and provide for program stability.

Shared Revenues

The federal government should continue to share the benefits of its greater and more equitable taxing ability with state and local government in a non-restrictive manner. When possible, the shared revenues should be provided in the form of block grants.

Encourage Public Investment

The maintenance and development of state and local infrastructure must be facilitated with federal tax exemptions for state and municipal debt and by special taxing and expenditure programs to meet priority needs.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes

Payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) should be made in full whenever the federal government removes or withholds otherwise productive property from the property tax rolls. PILT payments should receive the full cost of living adjustments annually.

Taxation Of Remote Sales

The federal government should endeavor to approve a nationwide system for sales taxation that ensures fairness between remote (online) and brick-and-mortar retailers.

Telecommunications

Counties endorse promoting competition among telecommunications providers and treating like services alike. Any effort to reform the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996 must maintain local management of the public rights-of-way, encourage investment in all communities and neighborhoods, preserve support funding for public education and governmental (PEG) channels and institutional networks (I-NET), and hold local governments fiscally harmless for any loss of fees or other revenue that result from franchise agreements.



The California County Platform | Chapter 10
Transportation and Public Works

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Transportation infrastructure and multi-modal transportation choices are essential for the current and future well-being of the State of California. A balanced transportation system utilizes all modes of travel in a complementary manner to provide all users access and mobility options to safely move about their community. Counties also recognize that climate change and the release of greenhouse gasses (GHG) into the atmosphere have the potential to dramatically impact our environment, land use decisions, transportation networks, and the economy. Due to the relationship between climate change and other issues, all sections in this chapter should be viewed in conjunction with Chapter Fourteen, which outlines CSAC's climate change policy.

- 1) Transportation infrastructure investments should balance the competing needs of all segments of society and the economy with maximum coordination between all levels of government and reasonable amounts of free choice for the consumer.
- 2) Transportation systems must be fully integrated with planned land use; support the lifestyles desired by people; and be compatible with the environment by considering GHG emissions, air and noise pollution, aesthetics, ecological factors, cost benefit analyses, and energy goals.
- 3) Transportation systems should be designed to serve the travel demands and desires of all the people of the state and support a robust economy, recognizing the principles of local control and the unique characteristics of each area.
- 4) Local control recognizes that organizational and physical differences exist and governments should have flexibility to cooperatively develop systems by which services are provided and problems solved.
- 5) Counties support new transportation funding for existing maintenance of low Pavement Condition Index (PCI) local roads to bring them up to an adequate and safe level.

SECTION 2: BALANCED TRANSPORTATION POLICY

System Policy and Transportation Principles

It is of statewide interest to provide for a balanced, seamless, and multi-modal transportation system on a planned and coordinated manner, consistent with social, economic, political, and environmental goals of the state. The statewide network includes the local streets and roads, state highways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail, and ports. Rural and urban transportation needs must be balanced to build and operate a single transportation system.

While urban transportation systems support significant daily vehicle miles traveled and the transportation of millions of people, the rural transportation network connects communities and plays a critical role in the movement of goods for the entire state. The statewide transportation system should be an asset to present and future generations. It must consider and protect the natural and built environment and support economic development of the state.

- 1) Transportation systems must be regularly and consistently maintained to preserve the existing public infrastructure (current revenues are not keeping pace with needs of the local road or state highway or transit systems), reduce the future costs to tax-payers, and protect the environment. All users of the system have a responsibility to adequately invest in the transportation infrastructure that is critical to every-day life.
- 2) Repairs to local access roads that are damaged during emergency operations (e.g., during a fire or flood) should be eligible for reimbursement under the same programs as roads which are directly damaged by the event.
- 3) System process modifications are needed to expedite project delivery and minimize project cost.
- 4) Heavy vehicles impose exponentially greater wear and tear on roadways than lighter vehicles. Many locally-maintained roads were constructed many decades ago and were never designed to accommodate heavy vehicles. Proposed increases in weight limits to improve efficiency by reducing number of heavy vehicle trips required, or to meet other policy goals, should be balanced against the costs of additional wear and tear on roads, bridges, and highways.

Financing Policy and Revenue Principles

Transportation financing needs exceed existing and foreseeable revenues despite growing recognition of these needs at all levels of government. Further, traditional sources of revenue for transportation are declining as communities develop more sustainably and compactly to reduce vehicle miles traveled and GHG emissions to meet statewide climate change goals. Additional funding is required and efforts to obtain these sources should be supported. Also, any new sources of funding should produce enough revenue to respond significantly to transportation needs.

- 1) As the owner and operator of a significant portion of the local system, counties support continued direct funding to local governments for preservation and safety needs of that system.
- 2) Counties support regional approaches for transportation investment purposes for capital expansion projects of regional significance and local expansion and rehabilitation projects through regional transportation planning agencies.

- 3) Single transportation funds—comprised of state and federal subventions—should be available at each of the local, regional, and statewide levels for financing the development, operation, and/or maintenance of highways, public transit, airports or any other modal system as determined by each area in accordance with local, regional, and statewide needs and goals.
- 4) The cooperative mechanisms established by counties and cities to meet multi-jurisdictional needs should be responsible for the financing, construction, operation, and maintenance of regional transportation systems utilizing—as appropriate—existing transportation agencies and districts. The owner of the transportation facility is primarily responsible for providing for the maintenance needs of their facility and must provide funding resources if this responsibility is delegated by mutual consent to another entity.
- 5) Federal and state funds for safety and preservation purposes should be sent directly to applicable operational levels without involvement of any intermediate level of government. Pass-through and block grant funding concepts are highly desirable.
- 6) The cost of transportation facilities and services should be fairly shared by the users and also by indirect beneficiaries.
- 7) Transportation funding should be established so that annual revenues are predictable with reasonable certainty over several years to permit rational planning for wise expenditure of funds for each mode of transportation.
- 8) Financing should be based upon periodic deficiency reports by mode to permit adjustment of necessary funding levels. Additional elements such as constituent acceptance, federal legislative and/or administrative actions, programmatic flexibility, and cost benefit studies should be considered.
- 9) Efforts to obtain additional revenue should include an examination of administrative costs associated with project delivery and transportation programs.
- 10) Funding procedures should be specifically designed to reduce the cost of processing money and to expedite cash flow. Maximum use should be made of existing collection mechanisms when considering additional financing methods.
- 11) In the development of long-range financing plans and programs at all levels of government, there should be a realistic appreciation of limitations imposed by time, financing, availability, and the possibility of unforeseen changes in community interest.
- 12) Existing funding levels must be maintained with historical shares of current funding sources ensured for counties (e.g., state and federal gas tax increases).

- 13) Although significant transportation revenues are raised at the local level through the imposition of sales taxes, additional state and federal revenue sources are needed such as additional gas and sales taxes, congestion pricing, public-private partnerships, and user or transaction fees, to provide a diverse financing strategy.
- 14) Additional revenue raising authority at the local and regional level is needed as well as other strategies as determined by individual jurisdictions and regions.
- 15) Transportation revenues must be utilized for transportation purposes only and purposes for which they are dedicated. They should not be diverted to external demands and needs not directly related to transportation activities.
- 16) Revenue needed for operational deficits of transit systems should be found in increased user fees, implementation of operating efficiencies and/or new sources, rather than existing sources depended upon by other modes of transportation. Local transit should receive state and federal support at a level commensurate with state and national plans that rely on transit's role in addressing the climate impact of the transportation system.
- 17) Future revenues must be directed to meet mobility needs efficiently and cost effectively with emphasis on current modal use and transportation choices for the public.
- 18) The impacts of climate change have further exacerbated issues in local agencies. Revenues should support maintenance and improvements that can provide resiliency to future climate change impacts.

Government Relations Policy

The full partnership concept of intergovernmental relations is essential to achieve a balanced transportation system. Transportation decisions should be made comprehensively within the framework of clearly identified roles for each level of government without duplication of effort.

- 1) Counties and cities working through their regional or countywide transportation agencies, and in consultation with the State, should retain the ability to program and fund transportation projects that meet the needs of the region.
- 2) No county or city should be split by regional boundaries without the consent of that county or city.
- 3) Counties and cities in partnership with their regional and state government, should attempt to actively influence federal policies on transportation as part of the full partnership concept.

Management Policy

Effective transportation requires the definite assignment of responsibility for providing essential services including fixed areas of responsibility based upon service output.

- 1) Greater attention should be devoted to delivery and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in a cost-effective manner with flexibility in delivery methods and project management.
- 2) Special transportation districts should be evaluated and justified in accordance with local conditions and public needs.
- 3) The State Department of Transportation should be responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining a system of transportation corridors of statewide significance and interest. Detailed procedures should be determined in concert with regional and local government.
- 4) Restrictive, categorical grant programs at the federal and state levels should be abandoned or minimized in favor of goal-oriented transportation programs which can be adjusted by effective management to best respond to the social and economic needs of individual communities.
- 5) Policies and procedures on the use of federal and state funds should be structured to eliminate unnecessary requirements, recognize the professional capabilities of local agencies, provide post-audit procedures, and permit the use of reasonable local standards.

SECTION 3: SPECIFIC MODAL TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

Aviation

- 1) Air transportation planning should be an integral part of overall planning effort and airports should be protected by adequate zoning and land use. Planning should also include consideration for helicopter and other short and vertical take-off aircraft.
- 2) State and federal airport planning participation should be limited to coordination of viable statewide and nationwide air transportation systems.
- 3) Local government should retain complete control of all airport facilities, including planning, construction, and operation.

Streets and Highways

The local street and road system, over 81-percent of the total maintained miles in the state, continues to play an important role in the mobility of Californians and critical for a vibrant economy. Further, local roads serve as the right-of-way for active transportation and transit. In a coordinated statewide transportation system, highways will continue to carry a great percentage of the goods and people transported within the state. Non-motorized

transportation facilities, such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities also are proper elements of a balanced transportation system.

- 1) Counties and cities must work cooperatively with regional agencies, the state, and the federal government to ensure the local system is maintained in a cost-effective and efficient condition and that is fully integrated into the statewide transportation network.
- 2) A program of highway maintenance and improvement of this modal system must be continued in coordination with the development of other modal components. Efforts to maximize utilization of transportation corridors for multi-purpose facilities should be supported.
- 3) Counties support efforts to design and build complete streets, ensuring that all roadway users – motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and users, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities – have safe access to meet the range of mobility needs.
- 4) Given that funding for basic maintenance of the existing system is severely limited, complete streets improvements should be financed through a combination of sources best suited to the needs of the community and should not be mandated through the use of existing funding sources.

Public Transit

- 1) Counties and cities should be responsible for local public transit systems utilizing existing transportation agencies and districts as appropriate.
- 2) Multi-jurisdictional public transit systems should be the responsibility of counties and cities acting through mechanisms that they establish for regional decision-making, utilizing existing transportation agencies and districts as appropriate.
- 3) The State should be responsible for transportation corridors of statewide significance, utilizing system concepts and procedures similar to those used for the state highway system. Contracts may be engaged with existing transit districts and public transportation agencies to carry out and discharge these state responsibilities.
- 4) Consideration of public transit and intercity rail should be an integral part of a local agency's overall planning effort and should maximize utilization of land for multi-purpose transportation corridors.
- 5) Public transit planning should include a continuing effort of identifying social, economic, and environmental requirements. Increasing Public Transit usage can assist the state in meeting its climate goals.

Rail

Railroads play a key role in a coordinated statewide transportation system. In many communities, they are central for intermodal transportation.

Rail carries a significant portion of goods and people within and out of the state. The continued support of rail systems will help balance the state's commuter, recreational, and long distance transportation needs. Support for a high-speed rail system in California is necessary for ease of future travel and for environmental purposes.

- 1) Rail should be considered, as appropriate, in any local agency's overall planning effort when rail is present or could be developed as part of a community.
- 2) Research and development of innovative and safe uses of rail lines should be encouraged.
- 3) Rail infrastructure is a relevant transportation technology that can assist the state in meeting its climate goals. Investments are needed to expand or restore service to meet passenger and commercial rail service demand.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Between 1994 (when the state gas excise tax was last increased) and 2017, when the Legislature passed SB 1 (Beall), California's population and travel increased, while revenues for maintenance and improvement of state highways and local roads failed to keep pace. In fact, by 2017 the value of the existing state gasoline tax had eroded to roughly half of its 1994 value due to inflation and improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency. SB 1 currently provides an ongoing source of approximately \$5 billion in revenue to invest in state highways, local roads, regional improvements, public transportation and active transportation and helps California to reverse the trend of deteriorating transportation infrastructure. However, due to the increased use of transportation modes that don't directly require fossil fuels (e.g., zero-emission vehicles, transit, and biking) revenues from SB 1 will inevitably decline. Current transportation trends and the state's current plans to reduce carbon emissions as a means to address climate change will require counties to examine new technologies and look for opportunities to diversify the revenue sources that support California's local transportation system.

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was a tremendous win for counties in California. IIJA included \$1.2 trillion in investments over five years from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 through FFY 2026, including \$550 billion in new spending on transportation, water and power infrastructure, and pollution cleanup, in addition to regular annual spending on infrastructure projects. CSAC supports future transportation investment in the maintenance of these transportation systems. Dedicated federal funds for maintenance are critical to sustain the system that counties have built in result of the passage of IIJA. CSAC is invested in working with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on possible future funding streams.

The 2021 California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment Report Update found that the condition of California’s local streets and roads has improved 1 point since 2018. On a scale of zero (failed) to 100 (excellent), the statewide average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) is now 66 (still in the “At Risk” category).

However, 55 of 58 counties are either at risk or below, with the seven lowest being on average in the worst category of “Poor.” The costs of poor road maintenance compound as condition decreases, moving repairs to full repaving and risking expensive catastrophic washouts in extreme weather events. While the state average condition is gradually rising, state intervention in the form of additional funding is needed for these most severely degraded roads within the state to ensure safe and reliable infrastructure for all residents.

Accordingly, it is vitally important to protect the \$1.5 billion share of local street and road formula funding from SB 1, which will be adjusted based on inflation and increasing vehicle values. Furthermore, CSAC must continue to advocate for streamlining administrative processes and environmental review and promoting efficiencies and sustainable practices that allow counties to maximize the benefits of transportation funding.

The citizens of California have invested significant resources in their transportation system. This \$3 trillion investment is the cornerstone of the state's commerce and economic competitiveness. Virtually all vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle trips originate and terminate on local streets and roads. Emergency response vehicles extensively use local roads to deliver public service. Public safety and mobility rely on a well-maintained transportation infrastructure. Protecting transportation funding is important to the economy and the economic resiliency of the state. Increased investment and incorporating mobility innovations in the transportation network is essential to stimulate the economy, improve economic competitiveness, and safeguard against loss of the public's existing \$3 trillion investment in our transportation system.

(The source of information for the statistics provided is from the Transportation California website and includes reports from the: California Transportation Commission (CTC), Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment.)



The California County Platform | Chapter 11

Human Services

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

Section 1: General Principles

Counties are committed to the delivery of public social services at the local level. However, counties require adequate and ongoing federal and state funding, timely distribution of funding, maximum local authority, and flexibility for the administration and provision of public social services.

Inadequate funding for program costs strains the ability of counties to meet accountability standards and, in some programs, avoid penalties, putting the state and counties at risk for hundreds of millions of dollars in federal disallowances and fiscal penalties. Freezing program funding also shifts costs to counties and increases the county share of program costs above statutory sharing ratios, while at the same time running contrary to the constitutional provisions of Proposition 1A and Proposition 30.

At the federal level, counties support additional federal funding to help maintain service levels and access for the state's neediest residents. Counties are straining to provide services to the burgeoning numbers of individuals and families in distress. With each downturn in the economy, counties experience an increased need of individuals and families seeking assistance through vital safety net programs such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and General Assistance. Even in strong economic times, millions of Californians struggle to make ends meet. For these reasons, counties strongly urge that any additional federal or state funding must be shared directly with counties for programs that have a county share of cost.

Despite state assumption of major welfare program costs after Proposition 13, counties continue to be hampered by state administrative constraints and cost-sharing requirements, which ultimately affect the ability of counties to provide and maintain programs. The state should set minimum standards, allowing counties to enhance and supplement programs according to local needs of each county. If the state implements performance standards, the costs for meeting such requirements must be fully reimbursed.

Section 2: Human Services Funding

While counties are legislatively mandated to administer numerous human services programs including Foster Care, Child Welfare Services, CalWORKs, Adoptions, Adult Protective Services, CalFresh, and In-Home Supportive Services, funding for these services has often lagged behind the actual levels needed by counties to administer the programs. The state's failure to fund actual county costs places counties in the untenable position of backfilling the gap with their own limited resources or cutting services that the state and county residents expect us to deliver. In the budgeting methodologies for these programs, counties support the inclusion of requirements to provide annual adjustments or revisit funding levels at specific intervals in order to ensure state funding keeps up with actual county costs.

2011 Realignment shifted fiscal responsibility for the Foster Care, Child Welfare Services, Adoptions and Adult Protective Services programs to the counties. Counties remain committed to the overall principle of fair, predictable, and ongoing funding for human services programs that keeps pace with actual costs. Please see the Realignment Chapter of the CSAC Platform and accompanying principles.

A key area of concern for human services agencies is worker recruitment and retention. Counties support increased investments to strengthen the county workforce, expanding educational and job training pathways, and policies that can help counties more effectively recruit, hire, and retain workers to ensure safety net programs can continue to operate seamlessly, meet increased demands, and serve individuals and families in need.

Section 3: Child Welfare Services/Foster Care

A child deserves to grow up in an environment that is healthy, safe, and nurturing. To meet this goal, families and caregivers should have access to public and private services that are comprehensive and collaborative. Further, recent system reforms and court-ordered changes, such as the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) effort require collaboration between county child welfare services/foster care and mental health systems as well as other systems.

Since the enactment of 2011 Realignment, dramatic changes in child welfare policy have occurred, as well as significant demographic and societal changes, impacting the workload demands of the current system. 2011 Realignment provides a mechanism that will help meet some of the current needs of the child welfare services system, but new workload requirements and continued pressure to expand services remain a concern without additional investments by the state and federal government.

Further, court settlements (Katie A.) and policy changes (AB 12 Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 and AB 403, CCR) require close state/county collaboration with an emphasis on ensuring adequate ongoing funding that adapts to the needs of children who qualify. Additionally, the specified court settlements and policy changes require close coordination across local county systems to ensure that children and youth receive all medically necessary behavioral health services.

The CCR enacted significant changes in the child welfare program and the county behavioral health delivery system that intended to reduce the use of group homes and improve outcomes for foster youth. In addition, CCR is designed to increase the availability of trauma-informed services and utilize child and family teams to meet the unique needs of foster youth. Counties remain firmly committed to the ongoing implementation of these comprehensive and systematic changes, while seeking the flexibility to create programs and placements to foster success for this unique population.

- 1) Counties support a comprehensive array of prevention, intervention and post-permanency services for children, youth and families. Both counties and the state have a stake in achieving desired outcomes and as such, these services should be resourced appropriately.
- 2) When, despite the provision of voluntary services, the family or caregiver is unable to minimally ensure or provide a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment, a range of intervention approaches should be available for families. When determining the appropriate intervention approach, the best interest of the child should always be the first consideration.
- 3) When a child is in danger of physical harm or neglect, either the child or alleged offender may be removed from the home, and formal dependency and criminal court actions may be taken. Where appropriate, family preservation, and support services should be available in a comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and timely manner.
- 4) Counties support efforts to reform the congregate care – or youth group home – system under AB 403, the CCR. Providing stable family homes for all of our foster and probation youth is

anticipated to lead to better outcomes for those youth and our communities. However, funding for this massive post-2011 Realignment system change is of paramount importance. Any reform efforts must also consider issues related to collaboration, capacity, and funding. County efforts to recruit, support, and retain foster family homes and provide pathways to behavioral health support are but some of the challenges under CCR. Additionally, reform efforts must take into account the needs of juveniles who are wards of the court.

- 5) When foster children/youth cannot return home, counties support a permanency planning process that matches foster children/youth through adoption and/or guardianship, with a foster caregiver. Counties support efforts to accelerate the judicial process for terminating parental rights in cases where there has been serious abuse and where it is clear that the family cannot be reunified.
- 6) Counties support adequate state funding for adoption services and post-permanency supportive services.
- 7) Counties seek to obtain additional funding and flexibility at both the state and federal levels to provide robust transitional services to foster youth such as housing, employment services, and increased access to aid up to age 26. Counties support such ongoing services for former and emancipated foster youth up to age 26. Counties have implemented the Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 for non-minor dependents in foster care (aged 18-21) and have assumed hundreds of millions of dollars in costs that have not been reimbursed by the state, an issue that remains unresolved.
- 8) With regards to caseload and workload standards in child welfare, especially with major policy reforms such as CCR, counties remain concerned about increasing workloads, high staff turnover, and the possibility of reduced Realignment funding in an economic downturn, both of which threaten the ability of county child welfare agencies to meet their federal and state mandates in serving children and families impacted by abuse and neglect.
- 9) Counties support a reexamination of reasonable caseload levels given significant recent changes in policy and practice, including CCR and AB 12, and the complex needs of children, youth and families, often requiring cross-system collaboration (i.e., youth with developmental disabilities, behavioral health needs, and special education needs) with youth and families. Counties support ongoing augmentations for Child Welfare Services, including investments in workforce development and workload reduction, to support children and families in crisis. Counties also support efforts to document workload needs and gather data in these areas so that we may ensure adequate funding for this complex system.
- 10) Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a growing national and statewide issue. Counties believe this complex problem warrants immediate attention, including funding for prevention, intervention, and direct services through county child welfare services agencies. Counties support efforts to build capacity within local child welfare agencies to serve child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Counties support close cooperation on CSEC issues with law enforcement, the judiciary, and community-based organizations to ensure the best outcomes for child victims.
- 11) As our focus remains on the preservation and empowerment of families, we believe the potential for the public to fear some increased risk to children is outweighed by the positive effects of a

research-supported family preservation emphasis. Within the family preservation and support services approach, the best interest of the child should always be the first consideration. Counties support transparency related to child fatality and near-fatality incidents so long as it preserves the privacy of the child and additional individuals who may reside in a setting but were not involved or liable for any incidents.

- 12) With regard to those foster youth with highly complex care needs, there remain challenges in providing the services and in-state placements that are needed for this population. Counties support further state and county coordination as was started by AB 2083 (2018), increased federal and state investments, and improving the tools and capacity to help meet the needs of these youth.

Section 4: Employment and Self-Sufficiency Programs

Self-sufficiency and employment programs play a critical role in the well-being of county residents and provide needed cash assistance, food assistance, and employment services for eligible individuals. The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program is California's version of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides temporary cash assistance to low-income families with children to meet basic needs as well as welfare-to-work services that help families become self-sufficient. CalFresh is California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides food assistance benefits to help improve the health of low-income families and individuals.

There is a need for simplification of the administration of public assistance programs. The state should continue to take a leadership role in seeking state and federal legislative and regulatory changes to achieve simplification, consolidation, equity, and consistency across all major public assistance programs, including CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, and CalFresh. In addition, electronic technology improvements in human services administration are important tools to obtaining a more efficient and accessible system. It is only with adequate and reliable resources and flexibility that counties can truly address the fundamental barriers that many families have to self-sufficiency.

- 1) California counties are far more diverse from county to county than many regions of the United States. The state's welfare structure should recognize this diversity and allow counties flexibility in administering welfare programs, while providing overall state-level leadership that draws on the latest understanding of how families in poverty interact with public systems and how to best support them toward self-sufficiency. There should remain as much uniformity as possible in areas such as eligibility requirements, grant levels and benefit structures. To the extent possible, program standards should seek to minimize incentives for public assistance recipients to migrate from county to county within the state.
- 2) The welfare system should also recognize the importance of and provide sufficient federal and state funding for education, job training and job retention, nutrition, subsidized employment, child care, and support services that are necessary to move recipients to self-sufficiency. There should also be sufficient federal and state funding for retention services, such as child care and additional training, to assist former recipients in maintaining employment.
- 3) Any state savings from the welfare system should be directed to counties to provide assistance to the affected population for programs at the counties' discretion, such as General Assistance, indigent health care, job training, child care, mental health, alcohol and drug services, and other

services required to accomplish welfare-to-work goals.

- 4) Federal and state programs should include services that accommodate the special needs of people who relocate to or within the state after experiencing an emergency or natural disaster.
- 5) Counties support providing services for indigents at the local level. However, the state should assume the principal fiscal responsibility for administering programs such as General Assistance. The structure of federal and state programs must not shift costs or clients to county-level programs without full reimbursement.
- 6) Welfare-to-work efforts should focus on prevention of the factors that lead to poverty and welfare dependency including unemployment, underemployment, behavioral health and/or illness, lack of educational opportunities, food security issues, lack of access to child care, violence, and housing problems. Counties support the development of a continuous quality improvement system with agreed upon measures and the consideration of incentives for improvement. Program rules, metrics, and incentives should be aligned to reduce barriers and provide services that best improve the prospects for long-term stability and employment. Prevention efforts should also acknowledge the responsibility of absent parents by improving efforts for absent parent location, paternity establishment, child support award establishment, and the timely collection of child support.
- 7) California's unique position as the nation's leading agricultural state should be leveraged to increase food security for its residents. Counties support increased nutritional supplementation efforts at the state and federal levels, including increased aid, longer terms of aid, and increased access for those in need. Counties encourage food assistance programs to prioritize partnerships and incentives with locally grown food producers.
- 8) Counties recognize safe, dependable, and affordable child care as an integral part of attaining and retaining employment and overall family self-sufficiency, and therefore support efforts to seek additional funding to expand child care eligibility, access, and quality programs.
- 9) Counties support efforts to address housing supports and housing assistance efforts at the state and local levels. Long-term planning, creative funding, and accurate data on homelessness are essential to addressing housing security and homelessness issues.
- 10) The state should fully fund county costs for the administration of the CalWORKs and CalFresh programs, and consult with counties on all policy, operational, and technological changes in the administration of the programs.

Section 5: Medicaid Eligibility

Counties support health care reform efforts to expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for all California residents, including the full implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) and the expansion of coverage to the fullest extent allowed under federal law. Health care eligibility and enrollment functions must build on existing local infrastructure and processes and remain as accessible as possible. Counties are required by law to administer eligibility and enrollment functions for Medi-Cal, and recognize that many of the new enrollees under the ACA may also participate in other human services programs. For this reason, counties support the continued role of county welfare departments in Medi-Cal eligibility, enrollment, outreach, and retention functions.

The state should fully fund county costs for the administration of the Medi-Cal program, and consult with counties on all policy, operational, and technological changes in the administration of the program. Further, enhanced data matching and case management of these enrollees must include adequate funding and be administered at the local level.

Section 6: Aging and Dependent Adults

California is home to more older adults than any other state in the nation and this population continues to grow and become more diverse. The huge growth in the number of older Californians will affect how local governments plan for and provide services, running the gamut from housing and health care to transportation and in-home care services. While many counties are addressing the needs of their older and dependent adult populations in unique and innovative ways, all are struggling to maintain basic safety net services in addition to ensuring an array of services needed by this aging and dependent adult population.

Adult Protective Services

The Adult Protective Services (APS) Program is the state's safety net program for abused and neglected adults. Counties provide around-the-clock critical services to protect the state's most vulnerable seniors and dependent adults from abuse and neglect. Counties must retain local flexibility in meeting the needs of our aging and dependent adult population, and timely response by local APS is critical.

- 1) Counties support adequate funding for Adult Protective Services, including for the APS expansion to older adults age 60 and older.
- 2) Counties support efforts to prevent, identify, and prosecute instances of elder and dependent adult abuse.
- 3) Counties support investments of new state and federal resources to support the APS workforce and enhance the case management and direct services available to victims of abuse and neglect.

Aging Programs

- 1) Counties are committed to addressing the unique needs of older and dependent adults in their communities, support collaborative efforts to build a continuum of services as part of a long-term system of care for this vulnerable but vibrant population, support reliable funding for programs that affect older and dependent adults, and oppose any funding cuts, or shifts of costs to counties without revenue, from either the state or federal governments.
- 2) Counties support federal and state funding to support Alzheimer's disease and dementia research, community education and outreach, respite care, and resources for caregivers, family members and those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- 3) Counties support legislative efforts coupled with adequate funding to prevent homelessness among at-risk older adults and people with disabilities.
- 4) Counties support adequate funding for the full range of aging programs that provide services to older adults through Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), such as senior nutrition programs, meal delivery programs, caregiver supports, resource centers, ombudsman programs, and home and

community-based supports. This includes sufficient funding to meet any newly established performance measurements.

- 5) Counties should maintain flexibility and control to determine locally the AAA administrative structure that works best in their communities for delivering aging services, including planning service area boundaries, and be consulted on any changes to the intrastate funding formula.

In-Home Supportive Services

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program is a federal Medicaid program administered by the state and run by counties that enables program recipients to hire a caregiver to provide services that enable that person to stay in their home safely and prevents institutional care, which supports California in meeting federal Olmstead Act requirements. Individuals eligible for IHSS services are disabled, age 65 or older, or those who are blind and unable to live safely at home without help.

County social workers evaluate prospective and ongoing IHSS recipients, who may receive assistance with such tasks as housecleaning, meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, personal care services such as bathing, paramedical services, and accompaniment to medical appointments. Once a recipient is authorized for service hours, the recipient is responsible for hiring their provider.

Although the recipient is considered the employer for purpose of hiring, supervising, and firing their provider, state law requires counties to establish an “employer of record” for purposes of collective bargaining to set provider wages and benefits.

As California’s aging population continues to increase, costs and caseloads for the program continue to grow. In response to the end of the Coordinated Care Initiative and the County IHSS Maintenance of Effort (MOE), a new MOE was negotiated during the 2017-18 state budget process. The 2017-18 MOE included specific offsetting revenue, including a State General Fund contribution, but was not sustainable for county costs. During the 2019-20 state budget process, a new and more sustainable county IHSS MOE was negotiated and enacted.

- 1) Counties support the continuation of federal and state funding for IHSS and oppose any efforts to shift additional IHSS costs to counties.
- 2) The IHSS MOE negotiated in the 2017-18 state budget was not sustainable for counties as the county share of IHSS costs would have significantly outpaced the available revenues in the out years. Counties support changes enacted in the 2019-20 budget that provided additional state funding for IHSS costs and lowered the county share of IHSS costs. Counties support a long-term solution that aligns the county share of IHSS costs with the available revenues, which could occur through a lowered sharing ratio, restructured MOE, or increased State General Fund contribution.
- 3) The state should fully fund county and public authority costs for the administration of the IHSS program, and consult with counties on all policy, operational, and technological changes in the administration of the program.

- 4) Counties support moving collective bargaining for the IHSS program to a single statewide entity. If collective bargaining is moved to the state, it must be done in a manner that works effectively with county funding and programmatic responsibilities. This includes ensuring counties do not have fiscal responsibilities for any increased costs outside of their control, preserving administration funding for counties and public authorities, and including appropriate county representation in bargaining decisions that have a direct impact on county costs or county and public authority administrative responsibilities.

Section 7: Child Support Program

Counties are committed to strengthening the child support program, delivering the best possible services to families participating in the program, and helping to address California's child poverty crisis through implementation of federal mandates and state statutes. Ensuring effective and efficient ongoing operations requires sufficient federal and state funding for each local child support agency. And any federal or state child support policy changes should not result in increased county costs and any increased administrative responsibilities should be fully funded. Counties support maximizing federal funding for child support operations at the county level.

- 1) The way in which child support funding is structured prevents many counties from efficiently meeting state and federal collection guidelines and occasionally leads smaller counties to adopt a regionalized approach or, more alarmingly, fail to provide needed services as mandated by existing standards. Counties need an adequate and sustainable funding stream for both programmatic and administrative responsibilities, as well as flexibility at the local level to ensure timely and accurate child support efforts, and must not be held liable for failures to meet guidelines in the face of inadequate and inflexible funding.
- 2) Counties must have the freedom to make local decisions at the local level. While program standards and mandates are codified in state statute and federal mandate, the unique decisions on how to operationalize those mandates in a manner that addresses the unique needs of the families being served by each local child support agency must remain a decision that is made at the local level.

A successful child support program requires a partnership between the state and counties. Counties must have meaningful and regular input into the development of state policies and guidelines regarding the child support program and the local flexibility to organize and structure effective programs.

Section 8: Realignment

In 1991, the state and counties entered into a new fiscal relationship known as 1991 Realignment. 1991 Realignment affects health, mental health, and social services programs and funding. The state transferred control of programs to counties, altered program cost-sharing ratios, and provided counties with dedicated tax revenues from state sales tax and vehicle license fees to pay for these changes.

In 2011, counties assumed fiscal responsibility for Child Welfare Services, adoptions, adoptions assistance, Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment services, foster care and Adult Protective Services as part of the 2011 Public Safety Realignment. Please see the Realignment chapter of the CSAC Platform and accompanying principles.

- 1) Counties support the concept of state and local program realignment and the principles adopted by CSAC and the Legislature in forming realignment. Thus, counties believe the integrity of realignment should be protected.
- 2) Counties strongly oppose any change to realignment funding that would negatively impact counties. Counties remain concerned and will resist any reduction of dedicated realignment revenues or the shifting of new costs from the state and further mandates of new and greater fiscal responsibilities in this partnership program.
- 3) Any effort to realign additional programs must occur within the context of the constitutional provisions of Proposition 1A or Proposition 30.

Section 9: Early Childhood

Counties recognize the importance of policies that advance whole child, whole family approaches, increase racial equity, build integrated systems and focus on prevention to enhance critical services for children and families. As such, counties support strengthening early care, comprehensive health and development, and learning programs and systems, with a focus on programs that counties administer, facilitate participation in, or that enhance the ability of First 5 commissions to serve communities and families.

Counties will also consider how improved early childhood and family outcomes lead to positive impacts related to other programs and systems that counties administer. Counties support efforts that improve system coordination and encourage leveraging of resources within counties and between local and state agencies to enhance critical services for children and families. For child care, counties support increasing access to early care and education opportunities, promoting efforts to recruit, train, and retain providers, expanding child care availability, and investing in child care facilities and infrastructure.

Proposition 10: The First 5 Children and Families Commissions

In November 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, the “Children and Families Act of 1998” initiative, which created the 58 First 5 county commissions across the state. The Act levies a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products and provides funding for early childhood development programs and mandates that commissions work across systems to integrate service delivery and promote optimal childhood development.

First 5 Children and Families Commissions believe that every child deserves to be healthy, safe, and ready to succeed in school and life. Based on extensive research, First 5 promotes the importance of collective impact to support children and families from the earliest moments possible. This prevention framework leads to improved child health and development outcomes, increased school success, and over time increases economic benefit across all public systems.

- 1) Counties oppose any effort to diminish First 5 funding, lower or eliminate state support for county programs with the expectation that the state or local First 5 commissions will backfill the loss with Proposition 10 revenues. Due to the declining nature of tobacco tax revenues, counties support the inclusion of existing tobacco taxes, including Proposition 10, in any subsequent tobacco proposal.

- 2) Counties support identifying new ongoing and sustainable funding for First 5 programs, as well as prioritizing coordination and alignment with county-based systems of care and existing First 5 services and initiatives for any new funding.
- 3) Counties oppose any effort to restrict local First 5 expenditure authority. First 5 commissions must maintain the necessary flexibility to direct these resources to address the greatest needs of communities surrounding family resiliency, comprehensive health and development, quality early learning, and systems sustainability and scale.

Section 10: Violence Prevention

CSAC remains committed to raising awareness of the toll of violence – in particular, family violence and cases of ongoing control and abuses of power, hate crimes, and violence against women, children, the elderly, and other marginalized groups – on families and communities by supporting efforts that target violence prevention, reporting, investigation, intervention, and treatment. Specific strategies for prevention and early intervention should be developed through cooperation between state and local governments, as well as community and private organizations, taking into account that violence adversely impacts all Californians, particularly those in disadvantaged communities at disproportionate rates, and that these impacts have long-term and wide-ranging health and economic consequences. CSAC also supports efforts to build safe communities, use data-informed approaches, pursue trauma-informed care, and work with key partners to implement violence prevention strategies.

Section 11: Veterans

Specific strategies for intervention and service delivery to veterans should be developed through cooperation between federal, state, and local governments, as well as community and private organizations serving veterans.

Counties support coordination of services for veterans among all entities that serve this population, especially in housing, treatment, and employment training.

Section 12: Homelessness

Given the growing magnitude of California's homelessness crisis, CSAC reinstated the Homelessness Action Team in 2022 to develop guiding principles on homelessness. These *Homelessness Principles* were approved by the CSAC Board of Directors on September 1, 2022, were utilized to develop the AT HOME Plan that was released in March 2023, and will guide advocacy efforts around homelessness policies, investments, and proposals. The principles outline the need for a statewide plan, call for multi-level partnerships and collaboration while recognizing the need for clear lines of responsibility across all levels of government, detail the importance of building enough housing, and highlight how critical sustained and flexible state funding is to making progress.



The California County Platform | Chapter 12 State Mandates

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

The state is constitutionally required through Proposition 4 (1979) and Proposition 1A (2004) to pay for new or higher levels of service it mandates counties and other local agencies to provide. However, the issue of mandate reimbursement remains contentious, since mandates reside at the intersection of local control and the reality that counties are providers of state services.

SECTION 1: MANDATE SUSPENSION

The ongoing suspension of established mandated programs or services is problematic. The state should either fund a mandate annually or repeal it completely. Continually suspending mandates merely burdens counties with either funding the service out of its own general funds or absorbing the cost of repeatedly resetting service levels.

SECTION 2: NEED FOR MANDATES

Mandates are particularly burdensome for counties because of the severe restrictions on raising county revenues to pay for new requirements. State mandates should only be imposed when there is a compelling need for statewide uniformity.

SECTION 3: TIMING OF MANDATE PAYMENTS

All state mandates should be funded prior to delivery of the new or higher level of service. The current policy of reimbursing established mandates following a Commission on State Mandates determination constitutes a loan from counties to the state. The state should not require counties to provide a service for which it is unwilling to pay timely. Bills mandating new or increased levels of service should include a direct appropriation.

SECTION 4: MANDATE ALTERNATIVES

Local agencies and the state should endeavor to take advantage of Reasonable Reimbursement Methodology and Legislatively Determined Mandates. These processes will provide budgetary certainty to the state and counties and help to decrease the extraordinary time and cost involved with determining reimbursement levels through the traditional Commission on State Mandates process.

SECTION 5: MANDATE REFORMS

The current mandate determination processes must be reformed. The reforms must make the determination process more efficient, in terms of both time and cost, and less biased against local agencies. State audits of local claims must be timely, consistent, reasonable, and predictable.

It should not take several years to determine whether the state has required a new or higher level of service. State Controller audits should not be able to cut reasonable claims by half or more based on technicalities or unreasonable records requirements. Rules for tracking and reporting state-mandated costs must be clear and consistent for counties to ensure they can receive the full amount of state mandated costs they are owed.

Constitutional amendments should not exempt additional categories of state mandates from cost reimbursement. Also, voter approval of requirements or programs similar to those already established as reimbursable mandates should not be cause for the state to cease reimbursements.



The California County Platform | Chapter 13

Economic Development

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

To maintain a vital economy in California, counties support an economic development process that retains, expands, and recruits businesses while reducing regulatory barriers to such businesses. For example, regulatory barriers may include permitting issues, fees and taxes on business in California, and streamlining government.

SECTION 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM RETENTION

Counties believe that existing state economic development programs should be retained within existing resources. Job creation is important to counties and should help guide policy on such issues as investment in infrastructure and the allocation of state resources.

Currently, counties continue to advocate for the following programs to be retained within existing resources as budgeted by the State of California:

- 1) Office of Military Base Retention and Reuse. This office provides ongoing assistance and support to communities with closed bases, as well as communities with active installations, in an effort to ensure the continued viability and retention of the remaining bases in California.
- 2) Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (iBank). iBank is authorized to issue tax-exempt and taxable revenue bonds, provide financing to public agencies, provide credit enhancements, acquire or lease facilities, and leverage state and federal funds. iBank also provides low-cost financing to public agencies for a wide variety of infrastructure projects that help create jobs in California.
- 3) Marketing Programs. These programs include Team California, a network of economic development professionals actively involved in business attraction, retention, expansion, and job creation efforts throughout the state.
- 4) Small Business Development Centers (SBDC). The SBDC program links federal, state, educational, and private resources designed for small businesses. They provide one-stop access to free business counseling, planning, marketing and training programs.

- 5) Tourism. The California Office of Tourism supports efforts to attract tourist dollars to the state, and CSAC supports efforts to promote agricultural, historic, and natural resources tourism throughout the state.
- 6) Film Industry. The California Film Commission works to retain film production in the state, and CSAC supports partnerships and continued collaboration between the state and the efforts of regional and county film commissions.
- 7) Manufacturing Retention and Expansion Programs. CSAC supports tools to create and expand manufacturing jobs and capacity throughout California.

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (CDBG)

Counties recognize the importance of the Community Development Block Grant Program, which provides funding to small communities for economic development. This program is administered by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Counties maintain that this program is very important to rural counties and provides significant investment in the rural economy.

Within the economic development portion of the CDBG program, counties believe that there should be less paperwork, more flexibility, more emphasis on economic development issues, and an increase in the availability of technical assistance provided by HCD.

The state should provide more guidance and technical assistance to counties that need additional resources to apply for these funds.

Key priorities for reform in the CDBG Program include the following:

- 1) Model the state Economic Development CDBG program to the greatest extent possible after the current federal entitlement community to streamline the program.
- 2) Renew HCD's focus on technical assistance, specifically for jurisdictions with limited resources. This could include assistance from the California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) and Economic Development Corporations located throughout California.
- 3) Increase the focus on economic development, including the possibility of having an economic development advocate within HCD.
- 4) Improve communication between HCD and rural counties. This would include providing counties with new directives from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and alerting counties to best practices and funding provided by the

CDBG program. Counties also maintain that this should also include better guidance on the re-monitoring and auditing of grant recipients.

- 5) Increase the flexibility in the CDBG program to enable smaller jurisdictions to limit the amount of paperwork and regulations that currently make this program difficult to implement.

SECTION 3: MILITARY BASE RETENTION AND REUSE

Counties support funding for and the retention and sustainability of military installations and their inextricably linked sea, air, and land operating areas in California. The Department of Defense (DoD) generates billions for the economy in California, providing thousands of quality jobs with real benefits and career advancement opportunities. Counties believe that California is uniquely positioned to support military missions and operations and that the DoD provides a substantial economic benefit to the state. Therefore, counties vow to continue efforts to support, preserve, and enhance the military mission capabilities of areas throughout the state. In the area of military base reuse, counties support programs and efforts to attract high quality technological businesses that can maximize existing facilities to further the economic development goals of local governments. Counties further affirm that flexibility at the local level to help communities develop reuse areas in a timely manner is critical to the successful reuse of former military installations.



The California County Platform | Chapter 14
Climate Change

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors November 2024

SECTION 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) CSAC recognizes that sustainable development and climate change share strong complementary tendencies.
- 2) CSAC recognizes that mitigation and adaptation to climate change – such as promoting sustainable energy, improved access and increased walkability, transit oriented development, and improved agricultural methods – have the potential to bolster sustainable development.
- 3) CSAC recognizes that climate change will have a harmful effect on our environment, public health and economy. Although there remains uncertainty on the pace, distribution and magnitude of the effects of climate change, CSAC also recognizes the need for immediate actions to mitigate the sources of greenhouse gases.
- 4) CSAC recognizes the need for sustained leadership and commitment at the federal, state, regional and local levels to develop strategies to combat the effects of climate change.
- 5) CSAC recognizes the complexity involved with reducing greenhouse gases and the need for a variety of approaches and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- 6) CSAC supports a flexible approach to addressing climate change, recognizing that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate for California’s large number of diverse communities.
- 7) CSAC supports special consideration for environmental justice issues, disadvantaged communities, and rural areas that do not have the ability to address these initiatives without adequate support and assistance.
- 8) CSAC supports cost-effective strategies to reduce GHG emissions and encourages the use of grants, loans and incentives to assist local governments in the implementation of GHG reduction programs.
- 9) CSAC recognizes that adaptation and mitigation are necessary and complementary strategies for responding to climate change impacts. CSAC encourages the state to develop guidance materials for assessing climate impacts that includes adaptation options.

- 10) CSAC finds it critical that the state develop protocols and GHG emissions inventory mechanisms, providing the necessary tools to track and monitor GHG emissions at the local level. The state, in cooperation with local government, must determine the portfolio of solutions that will best minimize its potential risks and maximize its potential benefits. CSAC also supports the establishment of a state climate change technical assistance program for local governments.
- 11) CSAC believes that in order to achieve projected emission reduction targets, cooperation, coordination, and data exchange between federal, state and local entities must occur to address the role public lands play in the context of climate change.
- 12) CSAC recognizes that many counties are in the process of developing, or have already initiated climate change-related programs. CSAC supports the inclusion of these programs into the larger GHG reduction framework and supports acknowledgement and credit given for these local efforts.
- 13) CSAC acknowledges its role to provide educational forums, informational resources and communication opportunities for counties in relation to climate change.
- 14) CSAC recognizes that collaboration between cities, counties, special districts, and the private sector is necessary to ensure the success of a GHG reduction strategy at the local level.
- 15) CSAC encourages counties to take active measures to reduce GHG and create energy efficiency strategies that are appropriate for their respective communities.

SECTION 2: FISCAL

The effects of climate change and the implementation of GHG reduction strategies will have fiscal implications for county government.

CSAC recognizes the potential for fiscal impacts on all levels of government as a result of climate change, i.e. sea level rise, flooding, water shortages and other varied and numerous consequences. CSAC encourages the state and counties to plan for the fiscal impacts of climate change adaptation, mitigation and strategy implementation.

- 1) CSAC supports the use of grants, loans, incentives and revenue raising authority to assist local governments with the implementation of climate change response activities and GHG reduction strategies.
- 2) CSAC continues to support its state mandate principles in the context of climate change. CSAC advocates that new GHG emissions reduction programs must be technically feasible for counties to implement and help to offset the long-term costs of GHG emission reduction strategies.

- 3) CSAC advocates that any new GHG reduction strategies that focus on city-oriented growth and require conservation of critical resource and agricultural lands within the unincorporated areas should include a mechanism to compensate county governments for the loss of property taxes and other fees and taxes.
- 4) CSAC supports the allocation of cap and trade revenues to fund programs that help reduce GHG emissions at the local level. Specifically, CSAC supports the creation and sustained funding of programs that acknowledge that investment in mitigation and preparedness are more cost-effective than response programs.
- 5) CSAC supports changes and refinement to the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) to include criteria that reflects the diversity of disadvantaged communities in California.

SECTION 3: LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING

CSAC recognizes that population growth in the state is inevitable, and therefore climate change strategies that affect land use must focus on how and where to accommodate and mitigate the expected growth in California. Land use planning and development play a direct role in transportation patterns, affecting travel demands and in turn vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and fuel consumption. It is recognized that in addition to reducing VMTs, investing in a seamless and efficient transportation system to address congestion also contributes to the reduction of GHG emissions. In addition to serving vehicles and facilitating goods movement, local streets and roads are the primary right-of-way for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. Continued dedicated funding will be required to maintain local roads and bridges, while also improving safety for all road users, and adding capacity for transit and active transportation where the local context is appropriate.

The provision of housing affordable to all income levels also affects the ability to meet climate change goals. Affordable housing in close proximity to multi-modal transportation options, work, school, and other goods and services is a critical element to reducing GHG emissions in the state. Smart land use planning and growth, such as that required by SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008), remains a critical component to achieve the GHG emission reduction targets pursuant to AB 32 (Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006), particularly to address the emissions from the transportation sector (i.e. vehicle, air and train). In order to better understand the link between land use planning, transportation, housing, and climate change further modeling and consideration of alternative growth scenarios is required to determine the relationship and benefits at both the local and regional levels.

- 1) CSAC supports measures to achieve reductions in GHG emissions by promoting housing/jobs proximity and transit-oriented development, and encouraging high density residential development along transit corridors. CSAC supports these strategies through

its support for SB 375 (Chapter No. 728, Statutes of 2008) and other existing smart growth policies for strategic growth. These policies support new growth that results in compact development within cities, existing unincorporated urban communities and rural towns that have the largest potential for increasing densities, and providing a variety of housing types and affordability.

- 2) CSAC supports adding safe facilities for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit use on state highways that serve as local main streets, especially in rural unincorporated communities. The state should bear the costs of constructing and maintaining these improvements rather than putting additional pressure on limited local funds or competitive grant funding.
- 3) CSAC supports a balanced transportation policy that recognizes the need to promote alternatives to driving by improving state and local roadways to add safe access for transit, bicycles and pedestrians, where feasible and appropriate. At the same time, CSAC supports transportation investments that facilitate interregional travel and goods movement.
- 4) CSAC supports continued dedicated state and federal funding for maintenance and rehabilitation of local roadways and bridges as part of a broader climate change strategy. Effective asset management can reduce the lifecycle carbon emissions associated with these facilities.
- 5) CSAC supports policies that efficiently utilize existing and new infrastructure investment and scarce resources, while considering social equity as part of community development, and strives for an improved jobs-housing balance.
- 6) CSAC supports policies intended to reduce traffic-related fatalities and injuries by promoting vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle safety; including policies allowing local governments to reduce speed limits, continued funding for projects under the Highway Safety Improvement Program, enhanced traffic safety enforcement, public education and traffic safety campaigns, and improved availability of road safety data for local agencies.
- 7) CSAC supports the protection of critical lands when it comes to development, recognizing the need to protect agricultural lands, encourage the continued operations and expansion of agricultural businesses, and protect natural resources, wildlife habitat and open space.
- 8) CSAC acknowledges that growth outside existing urban areas and growth that is non-contiguous to urban areas may be necessary to avoid the impacts on critical resource and agricultural lands that are adjacent to existing urban areas.

- 9) CSAC supports providing incentives for regional blueprints and countywide plans, outside of SB 375, to ensure that all communities have the ability to plan for more strategic growth and have equitable access to revenues available for infrastructure investment purposes. It is CSAC's intent to secure regional and countywide blueprint funding for all areas.
- 10) CSAC supports new fiscal incentives for the development of countywide plans to deal with growth, adaptation and mitigation through collaboration between a county and its cities to address housing needs, protection of resources and agricultural lands, and compatible general plans and revenue and tax sharing agreements for countywide services.
- 11) CSAC recognizes that counties and cities must strive to promote efficient development in designated urban areas in a manner that evaluates all costs associated with development on both the city and the county. Support for growth patterns that encourage urbanization to occur within cities must also result in revenue agreements that consider all revenues generated from such growth in order to reflect the service demands placed on county government. As an alternative, agreements could be entered into requiring cities to assume portions of county service delivery obligations resulting from urban growth.
- 12) While local governments individually have a role in the reduction of GHG emissions through land use decisions, CSAC continues to support regional approaches to meet the State's GHG emission reduction and climate change goals, such as efforts which build upon existing regional blueprint and transportation planning processes. CSAC continues to support regional approaches over any statewide "one size fits all" approach to addressing growth and climate change issues. Further, CSAC supports countywide approaches to strategic growth, resource and agricultural protection, targeting scarce infrastructure investments and tax sharing for countywide services.
- 13) CSAC finds it critical that state and federal assistance is provided for data and standardized methodologies for quantifying GHG emissions for determining and quantifying GHG emission sources and levels, vehicle miles traveled and other important data to assist both local governments and regional agencies in addressing climate change in environmental documents for long-range plans.

SECTION 4: ENERGY

Reducing energy consumption is an important way to reduce GHG emissions and conserve. Additionally, the capture and reuse of certain GHGs can lead to additional sources of energy. For example, methane gas emissions, a mixture of methane, carbon dioxide and various toxic organic and mercuric pollutants, from landfills and dairies have been identified as potent GHGs.

Effective collection and treatment of these gases is not only important to the reduction of GHG emissions, but can also result in an additional source of green power.

CSAC continues to support efforts to ensure that California has an adequate supply of safe and reliable energy through a combination of conservation, renewables, new generation and new transmission efforts.

Energy Efficiency

- 1) CSAC supports energy conservation and energy efficiency, along with broader use of renewable energy resources. Counties are encouraged to undertake vigorous energy action programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each county. When developing such action programs counties should:
 - (a) Assess available conservation and renewable and alternative energy options and take action to implement conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy development when feasible;
 - (b) Consider the incorporation of energy policies as an optional element in the county general plan; and,
 - (c) Consider energy concerns when making land use decisions and encourage development patterns which result in energy efficiency.
- 2) CSAC supports incentive based green building programs that encourage the use of green building practices, incorporating energy efficiency and conservation technologies into state and local facilities. A green building is a term used to describe structures that are designed, built, renovated, operated or reused in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. Green buildings are designed to meet certain objectives using energy, water and other resources more efficiently and reducing the overall impact to the environment.
- 3) CSAC supports the state's development of green building protocols sustainable building standards, including guidelines for jails, hospitals and other such public buildings.
- 4) CSAC supports the use of grants, loans and incentives to encourage and enable counties to incorporate green building practices into their local facilities.
- 5) CSAC supports the use of procurement practices that promote the use of energy efficient products and equipment.

Methane Emissions

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to develop a dairy digester protocol to document GHG emissions reductions from dairy farms. CSAC supports funding mechanisms that support the use of dairy digesters to capture methane gas and convert it to energy.
- 2) CSAC supports state efforts to capture methane gases from landfills and waste treatment facilities, and supports development of a reasonable regulatory measure with

a feasible timeline to require landfill gas recovery systems on landfills that can support a self-sustaining collection system.

- 3) CSAC supports the development of a guidance document for landfill operators and regulators that will recommend technologies and best management practices for improving landfill design, construction, operation and closure for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions.
- 4) CSAC also supports funding mechanisms, including grants, loans and incentives to landfill and waste management operators to help implement these programs.

SECTION 5: WATER

According to the Department of Water Resources, projected increases in air temperature may lead to changes in the timing, amount and form of precipitation, changes in runoff timing and volume, sea level rise, and changes in the amount of irrigation water needed. CSAC recognizes the need for state and local programs that promote water conservation and water storage development.

CSAC recognizes that climate change has the potential to seriously impact California's water supply. CSAC continues to assert that adequate management of water supply cannot be accomplished without effective administration of both surface and ground water resources within counties, including the effective management of forestlands and watershed basins.

- 1) CSAC supports the incorporation of projections of climate change into state water planning and flood control efforts.
- 2) CSAC supports water conservation efforts, including reuse of domestic and industrial wastewater, reuse of agriculture water, groundwater recharge, and economic incentives to invest in equipment that promotes efficiency.
- 3) CSAC continues to support the study and development of alternate methods of meeting water needs such as desalinization, wastewater reclamation, watershed management, the development of additional storage, and water conservation measures.

SECTION 6: FORESTRY

With a significant percentage of California covered in forest land, counties recognize the importance of forestry in the context of climate change. Effectively managed forests have a lower probability of releasing large amounts of harmful GHG emissions into the atmosphere in the form of catastrophic wildfires. Furthermore, as a result of natural absorption, forests reduce the effects of GHG emissions and climate change by removing carbon from the air

through the process of carbon sequestration. CSAC also recognizes the benefits of biomass energy as an alternative to the burning of traditional fossil fuels, as well as the benefits of carbon sequestration through the use of wood products.

- 1) CSAC supports encouraging sustainable forestry practices through the existing regulatory process, and encouraging continued reforestation and active forest management on both public and private timberlands.
- 2) CSAC supports responsible optimum forest management practices that ensure continued carbon sequestration in the forest, provide wood fiber for biomass-based products and carbon-neutral biomass fuels, and protect the ecological values of the forest in a balanced way.
- 3) CSAC supports the state's development of general forestry protocols that encourage private landowners to participate in voluntary emission reduction programs and encourage National Forest lands to contribute to the state's climate change efforts.
- 4) It is imperative that adequate funding be provided to support the management of forest land owned and managed by the federal government in California in order to ensure the reduction of catastrophic wildfires.
- 5) CSAC supports additional research and analysis of carbon sequestration opportunities within forestry.

SECTION 7: AGRICULTURE

The potential impacts of climate change on agriculture may not only alter the types and locations of commodities produced, but also the factors influencing their production, including resource availability. Rising temperatures, changes to our water supply, and shifts in soil composition all could have significant impacts on California's crop and livestock management. Additionally, agriculture is a contributor to GHG emissions in form of fuel consumption, cultivation and fertilization of soils and management of livestock manure. At the same time, agriculture has the potential to provide offsets in the form of carbon sequestration in soil and permanent crops, and the production of biomass crops for energy purposes.

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to develop guidelines through a public process to improve and identify cost effective strategies for nitrous oxide emissions reductions.
- 2) CSAC continues to support incentives that will encourage agricultural water conservation and retention of lands in agricultural production.

- 3) CSAC continues to support full funding for UC Cooperative Extension given its vital role in delivering research-based information and educational programs that enhance economic vitality and the quality of life in California counties.
- 4) CSAC supports additional research and analysis of carbon sequestration opportunities within agriculture.

SECTION 8: AIR QUALITY

CSAC encourages the research and development and use of alternative, cleaner fuels. Further, air quality issues reach beyond personal vehicle use and affect diesel equipment used in development and construction for both the public and private sector.

- 1) CSAC supports state efforts to create standards and protocols for all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks that are purchased by the state and local governments that conform to the California Strategy to Reduce Petroleum Dependency. CSAC supports state efforts to revise its purchasing methodology to be consistent with the new vehicle standards.
- 2) CSAC supports efforts that will enable counties to purchase new vehicles for local fleets that conform to state purchasing standards, are fuel efficient, low emission, or use alternative fuels. CSAC supports flexibility at the local level, allowing counties to purchase fuel efficient vehicles on or off the state plan.
- 3) CSAC supports identifying a funding source for the local retrofit and replacement of county on and off road diesel powered vehicles and equipment.
- 4) CSAC opposes federal standards that supersede California's ability to adopt stricter vehicle standards.
- 5) Counties continue to assert that federal and state agencies, in cooperation with local agencies, have the ability to develop rules and regulations that implement clean air laws that are both cost-effective and operationally feasible. In addition, state and federal agencies should be encouraged to accept equivalent air quality programs, thereby allowing for flexibility in implementation without compromising air quality goals.
- 6) CSAC also recognizes the importance of the Air Pollution Control Districts (APCDs) and Air Quality Management Districts (AQMDs) to provide technical assistance and guidance to achieve the reduction of GHG emissions.
- 7) CSAC supports the development of tools and incentives to encourage patterns of product distribution and goods movement that minimize transit impacts and GHG emissions.

- 8) CSAC supports further analysis of the GHG emission contribution from goods movement through shipping channels and ports.

SECTION 9: SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

The consumption of materials is related to climate change because it requires energy to mine, extract, harvest, process and transport raw materials, and more energy to manufacture, transport and, after use, and dispose of products. Recycling and waste prevention can reduce GHG emissions by reducing the amount of energy needed to process materials, and reducing the amount of natural resources needed to make products.

CSAC continues to support policies and legislation that aim to promote improved markets for recyclable materials, and encourages:

- 1) The use of recycled content in products sold in California;
- 2) The creation of economic incentives for the use of recycled materials;
- 3) Development of local recycling markets to avoid increased emissions from transporting recyclables long distances to current markets;
- 4) The expansion of the Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003 and the Beverage Container Recycling Program;
- 5) The use of materials that are biodegradable;
- 6) Greater manufacturer responsibility and product stewardship.

SECTION 10: HEALTH

CSAC recognizes the potential impacts of land uses, transportation, housing, and climate change on human health. As administrators of planning, public works, parks, and a variety of public health services and providers of health care services, California's counties have significant health, administrative and cost concerns related to our existing and future built environment and a changing climate. Lack of properly designed active transportation facilities have made it difficult and in some cases created barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists. Lack of walkability in many communities contributes to numerous chronic health related issues, particularly obesity which is an epidemic in this country. Heat-related illnesses, air pollution, wild fire, water pollution and supply issues, mental health impact and infectious disease all relate to the health and well-being of county residents, and to the range and cost of services provided by county governments.

CSAC recognizes that there are direct human health benefits associated with improving our built environment and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, such as lowering rates of obesity, injuries, and asthma. Counties believe that prevention, planning, research, education/training, and preparation are the keys to coping with the public health issues brought about by our built environment and climate change. Public policies related to land uses, public works, climate change and public health should be considered so as to work together to improve the public's health within the existing roles and resources of county government.

- 1) CSAC supports efforts to provide communities that are designed, built and maintained so as to promote health, safety and livability through leadership, education, and funding augmentations.
- 2) CSAC supports efforts to improve the public health and human services infrastructure to better prevent and cope with the health effects of climate change through leadership, planning and funding augmentations.
- 3) CSAC supports state funding for mandated local efforts to coordinate monitoring of heat-related illnesses and responses to heat emergencies.
- 4) CSAC supports efforts to improve emergency prediction, warning, and response systems and enhanced disease surveillance strategies.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Climate change

A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Carbon Sequestration

Carbon sequestration refers to the provision of long-term storage of carbon in the terrestrial biosphere, underground, or the oceans so that the buildup of carbon dioxide (the principal greenhouse gas) concentration in the atmosphere will reduce or slow. In some cases, this is accomplished by maintaining or enhancing natural processes; in other cases, novel techniques are developed to dispose of carbon.

US Department of Energy

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

US Environmental Protection Agency

Greenhouse Gas

A gas that absorbs radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of radiation (infrared radiation) emitted by the Earth's surface and by clouds. The gas in turn emits infrared radiation from a level where the temperature is colder than the surface. The net effect is a local trapping of part of the absorbed energy and a tendency to warm the planetary surface. Water vapor (H₂O), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄) and ozone (O₃) are the primary greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



The California County Platform | Chapter 16 Realignment

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

In 2011, an array of law enforcement and health and human services programs – grouped under a broad definition of “public safety services” – was transferred to counties along with a defined revenue source. The 2011 Realignment package was a negotiated agreement with the Brown Administration and came with a promise, realized with the November 2012 passage of Proposition 30, of constitutional funding guarantees and protections against costs associated with future programmatic changes, including state and federal law changes as well as court decisions. Counties will oppose proposals to change the constitutional fiscal structure of 2011 Realignment, including proposals to change or redirect growth funding that does not follow the intent of the law.

CSAC will oppose efforts that limit county flexibility in implementing programs and services realigned in 2011 or infringe upon our individual and collective ability to innovate locally. Counties resolve to remain accountable to our local constituents in delivering high-quality programs that efficiently and effectively respond to local needs. Further, we support counties’ development of appropriate measures of local outcomes and dissemination of best practices.

These statements are intended to be read in conjunction with previously adopted and refined Realignment Principles, already incorporated in the CSAC Platform below. These principles, along with the protections enacted under Proposition 1A (2004), will guide our response to any future proposal to shift additional state responsibilities to counties.

2010 CSAC Realignment Principles: Approved by the CSAC Board of Directors

Facing the most challenging fiscal environment in California since the 1930s, counties are examining ways in which the state-local relationship can be restructured and improved to ensure safe and healthy communities. This effort, which will emphasize both fiscal adequacy and stability, does not seek to reopen the 1991 state-local Realignment framework. However, that framework will help illustrate and guide counties as we embark on a conversation about the risks and opportunities of any state-local realignment.

With the passage of Proposition 1A, the state and counties entered into a new relationship whereby local property taxes, sales and use taxes, and Vehicle License Fees are constitutionally dedicated to local governments. Proposition 1A also provides that the Legislature must fund state-mandated programs; if not, the Legislature must suspend those state-mandated programs. Any effort to realign additional programs must occur in the context of these constitutional provisions.

Counties have agreed that any proposed realignment of programs should be subject to the following principles:

- 1) **Revenue Adequacy.** The revenues provided in the base year for each program must recognize

existing levels of funding in relation to program need in light of recent reductions and the Human Services Funding Deficit. Revenues must also be at least as great as the expenditures for each program transferred and as great as expenditures would have been absent realignment. Revenues in the base year and future years must cover both direct and indirect costs. A county's share of costs for a realigned program or for services to a population that is a new county responsibility must not exceed the amount of realigned and federal revenue that it receives for the program or service. The state shall bear the financial responsibility for any costs in excess of realigned and federal revenues into the future. There must be a mechanism to protect against entitlement program costs consuming non-entitlement program funding.

- a. The Human Services Funding Deficit is a result of the state funding its share of social services programs based on 2001 costs instead of the actual costs to counties to provide mandated services on behalf of the state. Realignment must recognize existing and potential future shortfalls in state responsibility that have resulted in an effective increase in the county share of program costs. In doing so, realignment must protect counties from de facto cost shifts from the state's failure to appropriately fund its share of programs.
- 2) **Revenue Source.** The designated revenue sources provided for program transfers must be levied statewide and allocated on the basis of programs and/or populations transferred; the designated revenue source(s) should not require a local vote. The state must not divert any federal revenue that it currently allocates to realigned programs.
- 3) **Transfer of Existing Realigned Programs to the State.** Any proposed swap of programs must be revenue neutral. If the state takes responsibility for a realigned program, the revenues transferred cannot be more than the counties received for that program or service in the last year for which the program was a county responsibility.
- 4) **Mandate Reimbursement.** Counties, the Administration, and the Legislature must work together to improve the process by which mandates are reviewed by the Legislature and its fiscal committees, claims made by local governments, and costs reimbursed by the state. Counties believe a more accurate and timely process is necessary for efficient provision of programs and services at the local level.
- 5) **Local Control and Flexibility.** For discretionary programs, counties must have the maximum flexibility to manage the realigned programs and to design services for new populations transferred to county responsibility within the revenue base made available, including flexibility to transfer funds between programs. For entitlement programs, counties must have maximum flexibility over the design of service delivery and administration, to the extent allowable under federal law. Again, there must be a mechanism to protect against entitlement program costs consuming non-entitlement program funding.
- 6) **Federal Maintenance of Effort and Penalties.** Federal maintenance of effort requirements (the amount of funds the state puts up to receive federal funds, such as Title IV-E and TANF), as well as federal penalties and sanctions, must remain the responsibility of the state.



The California County Platform | Chapter 17 California Environmental Quality Act

Adopted by the CSAC Board of Directors March 2023

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), signed into law by Governor Ronald Reagan in 1970, establishes a process to incorporate scientific information and public input into the approval of development projects, both public and private. Viewed by many as California's landmark environmental law, CEQA has attracted controversy throughout its 43 years and its reform is a frequent subject of proposed legislation.

In order to respond to CEQA reform proposals, CSAC convened a working group of CEQA experts including, planning directors, county counsels, and public works directors to help draft policy principles to guide CSAC through ongoing reform debates. The following chapter sets forth the CEQA Working Group's principles and policy statements regarding CEQA reforms.

SECTION 1: ROLE OF CEQA

Counties acknowledge that CEQA provides essential environmental information to the local decision-making process. Its purpose is to ensure that governmental decisions take full account of environmental impacts, including reducing or avoiding significant environmental impacts wherever feasible, as well as fostering transparency in the decision making process.

The protection of our environment is a responsibility that counties take very seriously. Likewise, counties know that local governments must balance environmental protection and the need to complete necessary infrastructure projects and ensure the economic vitality of our communities. This balancing role is explicitly recognized in the CEQA statute and its Guidelines, which provide that CEQA must not be subverted into an instrument for the oppression and delay of social, economic, or recreational development or advancement. However, the CEQA process remains wrought with uncertainty, costly litigation, and project delays.

Counties believe there are several opportunities for enhancing key areas of CEQA to improve its effectiveness and the efficiency of the environmental review process while ensuring that the law's environmental protection and public involvement purposes are fulfilled. As lead agencies with responsibility for a wide range of environmental resources, counties have a unique ability to provide meaningful input into the process.

CSAC's focus is to identify improvements that will streamline our delivery of public works and other public projects and make our development review processes more efficient by enhancing

CEQA in ways that apply our increasingly scarce resources to actions that actually protect the environment.

The following general principles and policy statements are CSAC's foundation for representing counties and the citizens they serve at both the administrative and legislative level.

SECTION 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) Counties support the balance of sound environmental protection with the need to complete projects that promote economic prosperity and social equity. Any proposed CEQA revisions should seek to modernize, simplify and streamline the law, and not dismantle it or create new and equally complicated processes resulting in litigation.
- 2) Local government performs the dominant role in planning, development, conservation, and environmental procedures. Counties have and should retain the primary responsibility for land use decisions in unincorporated areas. In addition, counties should act as the lead agency where projects are proposed in unincorporated areas requiring discretionary action by the county and other jurisdictions.
- 3) The CEQA process should be integrated with the planning process wherever possible, including the preparation of programmatic or master environmental documents that allow the use of tiered environmental review (including negative declarations) to achieve a more streamlined CEQA process for subsequent development and infrastructure projects.
- 4) Counties support state funding to update and implement general plans, specific plans, sustainable communities strategies, and smart growth plans, including programmatic CEQA review of these plans.
- 5) CSAC encourages state and federal agencies to provide timely and complete review of local projects within the timelines set forth in CEQA so that issues relevant to those agencies' regulatory role can be addressed at the earliest possible time.
- 6) CSAC encourages local agencies to resolve CEQA disputes without costly litigation and in a way that buoys public confidence in local government. Examples of this include the use of non-binding mediation.
- 7) CSAC acknowledges its role in providing educational forums, informational resources and communication opportunities for counties in regards to CEQA practice and reform efforts.

SECTION 3: POLICY STATEMENTS

- 1) Counties support statutory changes that provide lead agencies with the ability to find that de minimis contributions to a significant impact are not cumulatively considerable.
- 2) Counties strongly support statutory changes to improve the defensibility of well-prepared mitigated negative declarations (MND), including but not limited to applying the substantial evidence standard of review to MNDs that meet certain criteria, such as those prepared for projects that are consistent with current zoning or an existing general plan.
- 3) CEQA currently allows for potential issues to be raised late in the decision-making process, giving rise to disruptive and counterproductive tactics known as “late hits” and “document dumps” to stall the project review process. Counties support limits on the submittal of late input into the process. In order to raise an issue in court, counties assert that the issue with an EIR or MND must have been raised during the Draft EIR or MND public comment period, unless the new issue was not known and could not have been raised earlier.
- 4) Counties support CEQA exemptions and streamlining for infill projects in both cities and existing urbanized areas in counties. Conditions for such exemptions and streamlining processes should be based on population densities that reflect reasonable infill densities in counties or other objective measures of urban development, rather than arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries.
- 5) Roadway infrastructure projects that protect the health and safety of the traveling public are subject to project delivery delays due to environmental review, even when a project replaces existing infrastructure. Counties support categorical and/or statutory exemptions and streamlining for road safety projects in the existing right-of-way. The maintenance or rehabilitation of existing public facilities, within existing public right-of-way, with previously approved environmental documents, should also be provided a streamlined process or be exempt from having to do another CEQA document.
- 6) Support measures to reduce or eliminate duplicative environmental review for public works projects that are subject to both NEPA and CEQA. This could include action at the federal level to allow use of the CEQA document in place of a NEPA document.
- 7) Counties support programmatic Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) and standardized mitigation measures for the flood management system, levee maintenance and capital projects that fall under certain thresholds.
- 8) Counties support providing the courts with more practical discretion to sever offending parts of a large project that is subject to CEQA litigation and allow the beneficial parts of a project to proceed when they are not relevant to the court’s CEQA decision.

- 9) Counties support transparency in the preparation and distribution of environmental documents. To accomplish this, CSAC supports state funding and assistance for the electronic filing of documents. Further, counties believe they are in the best position to decide how to make governmental information available to non-English speaking communities within their jurisdictions. Counties do not support state-mandated translation of CEQA documents.
- 10) Counties believe that in some circumstances existing environmental laws and regulations can be used to streamline the CEQA process and help avoid unnecessary duplication. However, counties also believe that any such standards or thresholds must be found by the lead agency to be specifically applicable to the project where they are applied. If the use of existing environmental laws is intended to exempt a project from further CEQA review, it should be focused on specific impacts and limited to “qualified standards” that the lead agency reasonably expects will avoid significant impacts in the area addressed by the standard.
- 11) Challenges to the contents of the administrative record have become a common way to create litigation delays and increased costs. Counties support a statutory clarification that the contents of an administrative record only include all documents that were submitted to the relevant decision making body before the challenged decision. Counties further support a statutory clarification allowing public agencies to certify both accuracy and completeness of an administrative record prepared by a petitioner. Counties support statutory clarification that resolution of disputes regarding preparation and certification of the administrative record should occur through motions to supplement which run parallel to briefing on the merits, not prior.
- 12) Counties support statutory revisions that increase the transparency by limiting the standing of parties filing CEQA lawsuits and actions to persons or entities with an environmental concern rather than economic interest in the project.
- 13) Counties support statutory revisions to the private attorney general statute governing awards of attorneys’ fees, which are available to petitioners but not defendants. This low-risk, high-return imbalance in favor of petitioners is one of the primary drivers for CEQA litigation.
- 14) Counties support the use of the substantial evidence standard for challenges to a categorical exemption.
- 15) Support efforts for streamlined CEQA and NEPA policies and procedures for agencies after a disaster to replace damaged infrastructure in-kind.