



# Public Records Act

## Update the Public Records Act

Every day, local government officials ensure transparency in government and serve as stewards of public resources by effectively implementing the Public Records Act (PRA).

However, **advances in technology and increases in the volume and complexity of records requests** are undermining the PRA.

This **act must be updated** to reflect 21st century realities in order to fulfill its original purpose, provide government transparency, and make wise use of taxpayer dollars.

“Our interactions with state and local governments during the project showed their commitment to the principles of open, accessible and accountable government.”

- Washington State Auditors Office, Report NO. 1017396

## The Public Records Act is Outdated

Significant technological advances since 1972 – the year the PRA was adopted by voters – have considerably changed the number, size, and complexity of the records that cities and counties must manage. **Between 2011 and 2015, the average number of requests increased by 36 percent.**

## Demand on Local Governments is Growing

Despite the growth in number and complexity of requests, local governments are making a concerted effort to keep up. **Governments fulfill 17 percent of requests the same day.** Overall, they fulfill 47 percent of requests within five days and 71 percent in less than 21 days.

Cities and counties invest a significant amount of time and resources in managing records and fulfilling records requests. **Governments spent more than \$60 million last year fulfilling public records request.** The dollars allocated to records management bring this figure even higher.

## Litigation Has Increased

**Fear of litigation drives too many decisions.** Cities and counties are agreeing to large settlements out of fear of enormous litigation costs. This is not a good use of taxpayer dollars, nor does it create a more open and accountable government. We need more clarity to avoid disputes and prevent misuse, as well as better options for resolving disputes when they arise.

1972

The year that the Public Record’s Act was adopted by Washington voters

36%

The increase in the average number of requests from 2011-2015

\$60M

The amount of money governments spent in 2015 fulfilling requests

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