



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, increases in the volume and complexity of 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.

1972

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

36%

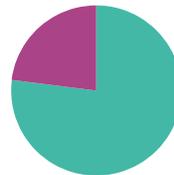
The increase in the average number of requests from 2011-2015

\$60M

The amount of money governments spent in 2015 fulfilling requests

The Public Records Act is Outdated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 2011-2015, the average number of requests increased by 36%.**



In a recent survey, **77% of respondents supported charging a small fee** to cover some of the cost of responding to public records requests.

Demand on Local Government is Growing

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

HB 1595 - Rep. Nealey (R-Walla Walla)

- Allows counties to charge a small fee for providing electronic copies
- Prohibits overly broad requests for all records of a county
- Counties can apply a service charge for exceptionally complex requests

HB 1594 - Rep. McBride (D-Kirkland)

- Creates a grant program local governments to improve their public record management systems
- Establishes a program to consult with local governments on public records best practices
- Studies the feasibility of establishing a statewide open records portal
- Provides for mediation between a county & a requester during disagreements

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