



**ARAPAHOE COUNTY**



# 2025 Legislative Issues Guide

**ARAPAHOE COUNTY**

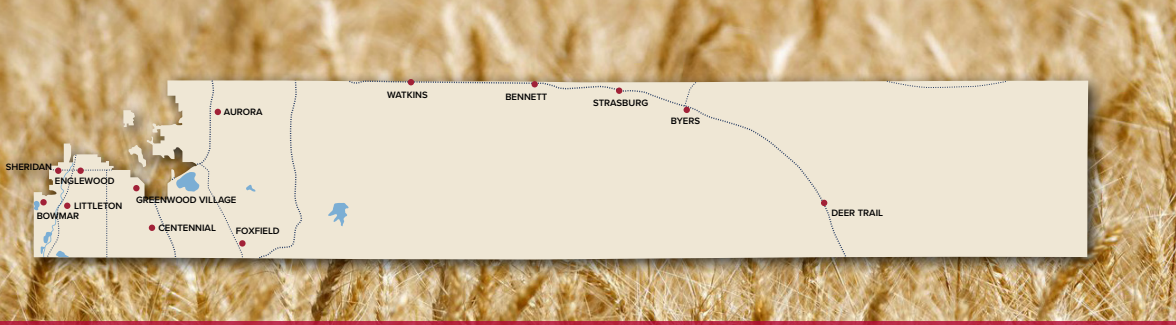
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# Arapahoe County

## About Us

Whether they've been here for a couple months or their entire lives, Arapahoe County residents realize that their community provides the best of everything Colorado has to offer. From babies to boomers and beyond, our residents put down roots, raise families, start and run businesses and embrace the endless opportunities and amenities that make Colorado so unique.

Arapahoe County is the third largest in the state with over 656,000 residents, 13 cities and towns, nine school districts, and 485 special districts, many of which provide water and sanitation services, public safety, and recreational facilities.

As a statutory county, Arapahoe County functions as an extension of the state and can only exercise powers clearly defined in state statute or the Colorado Constitution. The County is often tasked with implementing programs on behalf of the state and is responsible for law enforcement, including the court system, district attorney and one of the state's largest detention centers; the provision of social services, including food assistance, child and adult protective services, and workforce training; the construction, maintenance, and repair of roads and bridges; the management of a new public health department; and general control of land use in unincorporated areas.

The Board of County Commissioners is the primary policy-making body for the County and is responsible for the administrative and budgetary functions. Other County elected officers include the Assessor, Clerk and Recorder, Coroner, District Attorney, Treasurer, and Sheriff, all of whom are elected to four-year terms under the state constitution. These officials have specific powers and duties prescribed by law, and they function independently from each other and from the Board of County Commissioners. However, the Board of County Commissioners approves the budget for all County departments and elected offices.

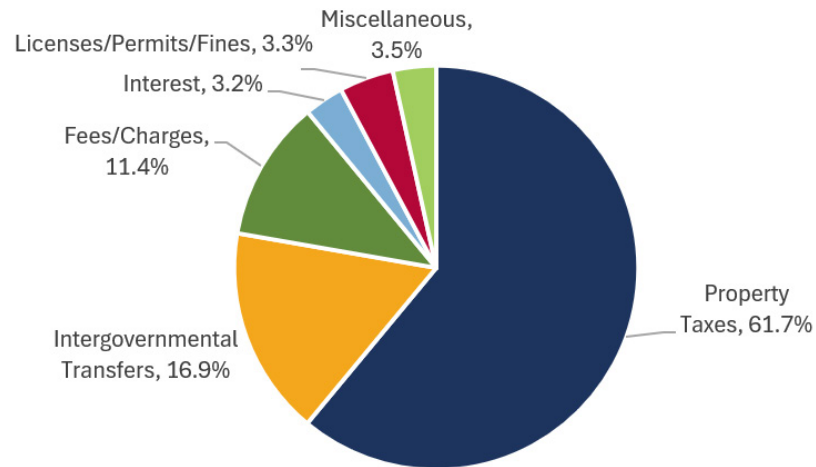
In addition to property tax, counties rely on state and federal funding sources to provide required services. Arapahoe County also has a 0.25% sales and use tax dedicated to open spaces, of which 50% is shared back with municipalities.



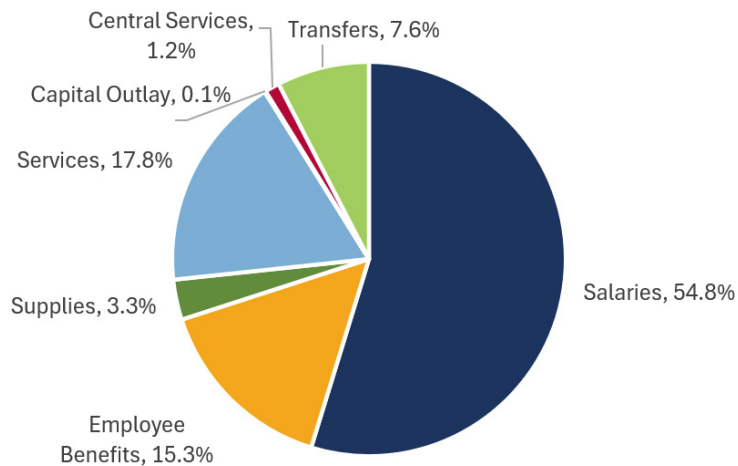
## 2025 Budget Snapshot

The County's 2025 Recommended Budget totals \$571.9 million. Forty-seven percent of this total comes from the General Fund which is used to fund essential services and associated staff, such as law enforcement, public works, and public health. Outside of taxes, the County's second largest funding source comes from intergovernmental revenue and grants from the state and federal government for critical programs such as workforce development, temporary assistance for needy families, child care assistance, and public health.

### 2025 General Fund Revenue



### 2025 General Fund Appropriations



In November 2024, Arapahoe County voters overwhelmingly approved Issue 1A, which releases the County from revenue and spending limits imposed by the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. The passage of 1A will help stabilize long-standing budget challenges. The Board of County Commissioners will implement a thoughtful and deliberative process to ensure these funds are used to continue essential services.



# Strategic Plan

## Mission

Enhancing your quality of life through exceptional delivery of services and efficient use of public funds.

## Vision

A diverse and vibrant County where residents and businesses thrive.

## Strategic Focus Areas

### 1. Good Governance

- Provide mandated and essential services.
- Plan for future service and fiscal needs.
- Understand and respond to community needs, interests, and values.
- Foster community safety and security.
- Increase collaboration to decrease silos and maximize resources.
- Operate in a transparent, inclusive, and communicative manner.

### 2. Increase Revenue. Increase revenue to maintain existing programs and services, reducing the backlog of deferred maintenance, while planning for the future.

- Ensure fees for service accurately reflect county costs.
- Increase County's ability to secure grant funding and other innovative ideas for existing assets and programs.
- Consider consolidating County facilities and leveraging under utilized assets.



**3. Sustainable Development.** Advance sustainable development strategies to protect human and environmental health and combat climate change.

- Implement smart growth policies and regulations to foster healthy communities and preserve our natural environment.
- Expand the number of charging stations across the county and diversify the County fleet.
- Increase access to transit services within the County.
- Implement bicycle and pedestrian master plan.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as improve energy and water efficiency within County operations.

**4. Housing.** Increase housing diversity, affordability, and accessibility.

- Increase number of affordable units by 3% annually.
- Understand county housing gaps and opportunities to influence outcomes.
- Advance regulatory changes to accelerate and incentivize housing projects that meet county needs.
- Proactively engage in legislative solutions.

**5. Economic Mobility.** Improve economic mobility for County residents.

- Secure technical assistance to identify County role, performance metrics, and opportunities to influence outcomes.
- Implement programs and policies that help break the cycle of poverty, address health-related barriers, and improve financial well-being for families.
- Utilize homeless coordinating committee plan and work with partners to make homelessness brief, rare, and nonrecurring.
- Support the vibrancy of and create opportunities within our local and regional economies.

**6. Workforce.** Support a stable and diverse county workforce.

- Provide competitive wages and benefits as is financially sustainable.
- Effectively transition 18th Judicial District staff to single-county office.
- Establish workforce-centered procedures to implement collective bargaining.
- Create a more inclusive and equitable organization through knowledge and practice of DEI principles.



## Values

Our work is rooted in our shared values—guidelines for how the County wants to approach our work and goals we want to achieve.

### Accountability

We demonstrate accountability by:

- Building trust with community through our decisions and actions.
- Holding ourselves to established clear standards, processes, and procedures.
- Adhering to a high standard of integrity.
- Sharing data and information to demonstrate fiscal responsibility, community responsiveness, and progress on County's strategic plan.

### Accessibility

We demonstrate accessibility by:

- Providing services in multiple ways.
- Seeking and understanding community interests using a variety of approaches.
- Making it easy to contact and connect with the right elected official and staff members.
- Being timely in responding to community interests.
- Providing facility access to people with differing abilities.





## Inclusivity

We demonstrate inclusivity by:

- Engaging community and cultural perspectives in decision-making.
- Striving for cross-county, cross-cultural representation on advisory boards, committees, task forces.
- Demonstrating inclusivity in our recruitment, development, and opportunities for advancement.
- Ensuring a welcoming, safe, and respectful environment by reflecting the diversity of Arapahoe County.

## Integrity

We demonstrate integrity by:

- Doing what we say we will.
- Following up, being responsive.
- Sharing both the good and the bad.
- Willing to admit/own when there is a problem.
- Adhering to the County Code of Ethics.



## Recent Strategic Plan Accomplishments

In 2023, Arapahoe County has:

- Leveraged \$5 million in one-time federal funds to provide gap financing to develop affordable housing across the County.
- Approved a Homelessness Strategic Plan that identifies regional approaches to coordinated care, expansion of affordable housing inventory, enhanced legislation and policy making efforts, and public information about the housing crisis.
- Adopted Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations to help increase the County's affordable housing supply.
- Helped veterans recover over \$6 million in disability claims, a 52% increase from the previous year.
- Performed 564,000 customer transactions and answered 83,000 customer calls to the County's Motor Vehicle offices.
- Provided \$2 million in funding to more than 20 area nonprofits that serve at-risk and underserved populations in the County, expanding critical safety net services.
- Responded to 700 public health complaints and launched new initiatives such as mpox vaccines, free breast and cervical cancer screenings, and Baby Café breastfeeding support.
- Held 105 hiring events and 20 job fairs for 3,517 jobseekers and 806 businesses.
- Digitized nearly 2,674,000 historical documents in the Clerk and Recorder's Office to ensure easier record access to residents, historians, journalists, and real estate professionals.
- Registered or updated registrations for nearly 161,000 voters throughout the 2023 Coordinated Election.
- Developed new oil and gas regulations that are some of the most protective in all of Colorado in collaboration with residents and stakeholders to address safety, traffic, and quality of life.
- Collaborated with airport officials to make Centennial Airport the first airport in Colorado to switch to unleaded aviation fuel.



- Distributed \$25 million to cities, towns and partner agencies to support local recreation and conservation efforts funded by the County's Open Space Sales and Use Tax.
- Completed the expansion of Cheyenne-Arapaho Park, providing a playground, dog park, community gardens, and additional picnic areas for residents.
- Created an annual Infrastructure Report Card to grade the condition of the County's roads, bridges, and other transportation assets.
- Converted turf at the County's Administration Building, saving 3 million gallons of water annually and helping promote sustainable development practices.
- Improved accessibility by launching new websites for Arapahoe County, the Sheriff's Office, and Public Health.
- Implemented the County's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement, and to create a place where all residents, employees, and businesses thrive.
- Created a citizens' commission to solicit public input in drawing new boundaries for County commissioner districts.

[View the complete 2023 annual report online.](#)



# Priorities and Principles

Consistent with its stated strategic plan and legal requirements, the Board of County Commissioners evaluates policy positions through the lens of human, environmental, social, and economic sustainability, so our decisions consider potential impacts to County programs and operations not just today but in the future. The following legislative principles describe the County's underlying interest on specific issues and serve as a consistent guide for the county in developing positions on federal and state legislation, rulemaking, and proactive issue advocacy.

This document also serves as a reference for elected representatives when considering legislation that may impact Arapahoe County. The Board of County Commissioners also may revisit the County's legislative priorities throughout the year.

## Specific 2025 Legislative Priorities

### FEDERAL ITEMS

- Eliminate the federal Medicaid inmate exclusion policy and support policy tools that provide greater flexibility in using Medicaid funding for reentry services and other alternate uses.
- Maintain adequate funding levels of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure workforce center sustainability.
- Champion policies that continue federal research of air and noise pollution caused by civilian and military aircraft, mitigate air and noise pollution, and enforce existing standards, rules and regulations, including enhancing opportunities for local control.
- Secure adequate funding for the implementation of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act and ensure the passage of the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act.
- Ensure adequate funding for implementation of the Older Americans Act.
- Advocate for multiyear infrastructure reauthorization bills to secure funding to improve the County's transportation network, regional airport, stormwater, and wastewater facilities.



## STATE ITEMS

- Ensure the transition of domestic violence cases from the City of Aurora to the 18th Judicial District is adequately resourced to effectively manage the increase in case load.
- Support the creation of a comprehensive, state-wide System of Care that serves children, youth, and young adults.
- Support the overhaul of the Colorado Benefits Management System to ensure benefits and resources are administered in a timely manner.
- Participate in the triennial review process to ensure retail food establishment fees are reflective of actual costs.
- Advance and refine access to funding programs that increase affordable housing and support programs for people experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure state and federal workforce funding is allocated to local workforce regions and not diverted to other workforce partners.
- Participate with local community correction programs to ensure state funding can adequately support alternative sentencing.
- Increase services and treatment placements for the highest acuity children in partnership with the General Assembly; the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health; and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.
- Promote the full funding of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) which have been negatively impacted by state and federal legislation.

## Guiding Legislative Principles

### COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Arapahoe County strongly believes the most effective governance results from local, state, and federal officials working in true partnership toward the development and implementation of programs and services. The County supports deeper coordination between government, breaking down silos to deliver results for shared constituencies.

Proactively working together to understand the nexus between policy and implementation helps ensure shared goals, an understanding of fiscal impacts, and outcomes that can be collectively achieved.



### UNFUNDED MANDATES

To effectively serve the needs of our community, Arapahoe County officials must have the resources and authority commensurate with the responsibilities placed on them by state and federal laws, regulations, and court decisions.

Arapahoe County supports adequate funding for any future state or federally imposed mandates upon local government, including the need for technology improvements necessary to fulfill these mandates.

Arapahoe County strongly opposes cost shifting from the state and federal government to local governments. While we recognize there are various pressures on state and federal budgets, it is important to acknowledge there are also similar constraints on county budgets. Arapahoe County urges our partners to refrain from adding additional programs and requirements without associated funding for implementation.

### LOCAL CONTROL AND FLEXIBILITY

County officials are the elected officials closest and most responsive to our residents. Arapahoe County supports the concept of local control and authority to ensure programs and services reflect the unique needs of our community.

The County opposes any administrative effort to promulgate rules and regulations that interpret the law in a manner negatively impacting counties. County Commissioners are important and necessary stakeholders in any rule-making process to ensure mandates are appropriately delivered to local constituents.





## REVENUE PREDICTABILITY

Arapahoe County believes any tax policy reform should ensure that the powers granted to counties and the funding mechanisms available are sufficient to address county responsibilities. Tax policy reform should create a fair and equitable distribution of the property tax burden among all property, reduce uncertainty, and ensure local governments have adequate authority and funding to meet their statutory responsibilities and the expectations of residents. The County supports more flexibility and tools in the toolbox—similar to municipalities—to diversify revenue streams and enhance fiscal sustainability. For new programs that would traditionally be funded with County property tax, the County strongly supports the state engaging with local governments to identify new funding sources as County property tax dollars are already stretched thin to meet current obligations.

The County supports requiring the state to reimburse local governments and districts for any loss in property tax revenues caused by constitutional or statutory changes in order to preserve the County's ability to fulfill statutory duties. Arapahoe County also supports local—not state—electors determining voter initiatives that affect the property taxes of a local government.

Arapahoe County seeks county authority to approve the use and the amount of the county portion of revenues designated in a proposed urban renewal plan for tax increment financing and to establish mechanisms to ensure that counties have greater influence to ensure proposed urban renewal projects meet the current statutory requirement of ameliorating blight.

## OUTCOME-BASED DECISION MAKING

Arapahoe County encourages state and federal governments to base decisions about laws and regulations affecting county governments on comprehensive data and measurable outcomes. Relying on these two standards to scrutinize existing and proposed laws and regulations will help reduce unnecessary, unfunded or underfunded mandates, streamline government, and utilize limited resources more efficiently. State and federal officials should also consider programmatic models that might exist as well as the possible limitations on local control that might result from new legislation, rules, or regulations.



## WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Home to some of the nation's largest companies and innovative small businesses, Arapahoe County is committed to maintaining a strong economic and business climate. Arapahoe County supports a strong partnership among counties, the state, municipalities, and private industry to design and implement economic development incentives and programs.

The County also operates Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, a publicly-funded workforce center that provides free services for businesses and job seekers, consistent with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser, and various other state and federal grants. Arapahoe County supports continuing a local delivery model to implement WIOA requirements and ensuring public funds are directed to public workforce centers.

## HUMAN SERVICES

Arapahoe County supports local administration of the human services system to maximize the flexibility and responsiveness of the system to local needs. Arapahoe County's Human Services department consistently achieves high rankings for service delivery, consistent with state and federal standards. The County supports a state supervised, and county administered human services system. The County also supports increased funding to provide these mandated services as well as the flexibility to best meet local needs without shifting costs locally, negatively impacting county government.

Arapahoe County supports policies that advance a two-generation (2Gen) approach, which simultaneously serves the whole family. The 2Gen approach helps children and families get education and workforce training, social supports like parenting skills, and health care needed to create a legacy of economic stability and overall well-being.





Arapahoe County supports local input into the state's budget management process to avoid supplemental appropriations requests for foreseeable circumstances. Arapahoe County supports maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements that allow flexible funding for social services programs to minimize, avoid increasing, or provide equitable distribution of fiscal responsibility of counties.

The County continues to advocate for 100 percent reimbursement from the state to administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and other adult assistance programs.

## SUSTAINABLE AND CONSISTENT FEDERAL FUNDING

The County relies on federal block and competitive grant programs from the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Infrastructure, Human Services, Public Health, and Veteran's Affairs to provide critical programs that enhance the safety net for vulnerable populations. The County supports maintaining these funding programs to support the community, distributing direct allocations to the County or through the state as appropriate.

## JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The County recognizes that focusing on and funding preventative services saves money. The role of the Sheriff's Office is to enforce the law, recognizing both the statutory and judicial limitations of police authority and the constitutional rights of all persons. Where possible, the County supports legislation that enables local decision-making on public safety services to permit development of locally appropriate solutions.

Arapahoe County seeks the timely administration of justice and supports adequate state investments to achieve this outcome within the new single county judicial district. Arapahoe County supports the concept and use of drug courts and other specialty courts to divert individuals struggling with mental health and substance use challenges away from the traditional justice system.

Arapahoe County recognizes that our jail population is changing, with the number of individuals with mental and behavioral health issues as well as crime severity increasing. The County supports programs that deliver mental health and substance abuse programs for individuals within the criminal justice system, providing alternative sentencing and pre-trial programs to help keep nonviolent and first-time offenders out of jail, and expanding programs that reduce the likelihood of reoffending once inmates are released in the community.

Arapahoe County supports timely and accurate reimbursement for housing state inmates in County facilities as well as efforts to alleviate the existing backlog of state inmates in County facilities.



## ELECTIONS

Arapahoe County is committed to implementing and coordinating elections in a nonpartisan manner, with utmost integrity. The County supports increasing voter access and education, while protecting voter privacy consistent with state statute.

## LAND USE

Arapahoe County believes in sustainable and responsible growth. It supports local control over the various uses of land and their impacts; recognizing that activities relative to growth, development, agricultural and farming interests, natural resources, and environmental management are unique within each community. The County opposes any efforts to supersede, override, or preempt local land use authority.

The County's 2018 **Comprehensive Plan** identifies six principles to help create a sustainable, resilient, and healthy community, including growth management, public facilities and services, economic health, transportation and mobility, natural and cultural resources, and environmental quality. The County also supports actions that ensure adequate water availability for future land use development. The County supports maintaining mechanisms that facilitate reasonable costs of growth and redevelopment, such as impact fees, real estate transfer taxes, and other growth-financing tools.

Recent state reforms require time and thoughtful implementation by local governments. The County encourages the state to provide room for this important work to take place.



## HOUSING

Arapahoe County believes housing is a human right and the availability of attainable and affordable housing is of utmost concern. Arapahoe County supports developing an adequate supply of diverse housing options across income brackets, with a focus on mitigating displacement and those most vulnerable.

Counties are uniquely positioned to help address the housing crisis because we understand our communities' needs, implementing effective land use planning and associated infrastructure. The County supports advancing programs and services that augment local government's ability to facilitate access to affordable and attainable housing, including state programs that promote regional cooperation and provide technical assistance.

The County supports deepening existing public and private sector strategies as well as funding to ensure efficacy of existing programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Proposition 123, administration of voucher programs, and land banking. The County also supports additional legislation that promotes increased construction of entry-level home ownership.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Arapahoe County believes the movement of goods and people are vital to the continued economic success of the state and Coloradans' quality of life. With several major highways, transit lines, 30% of Colorado's growing economy along the I-25 Corridor, and one of the nation's busiest regional airports, effective multimodal transportation is equally important to the success of the County's economy.

Arapahoe County has historically partnered on large-scale, regionally significant infrastructure projects, but is against efforts to pass along additional state roadway construction or maintenance responsibilities to local governments without increased and adequate funds to meet these additional responsibilities. The County also supports additional funding to meet multimodal infrastructure demands. The County is supportive of opportunities to provide safe and reliable transit service for residents, facilitating regional and local connections through the Regional Transportation District. The County is not supportive of divesting service to local governments without additional financial resources.

Arapahoe County continues to support an equitable Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) allocation formula and restrictions on the use of "off the top" diversions. The County opposes funding mechanisms which eliminate or reduce local shareback for transportation projects. Arapahoe County believes county commissioners should continue to have an enhanced role in prioritizing regional and statewide projects. The County also supports opportunities for counties to design their own transportation finance mechanisms to respond to local and regional transportation needs.



## HOMELESSNESS

Arapahoe County recognizes that homelessness is a complex, interconnected issue and that people experience homelessness for a multitude of reasons. The County supports a multi-disciplinary Housing First approach to addressing homelessness by alleviating generational poverty, providing accessible workforce development opportunities for its most vulnerable populations, providing resource navigation, opportunities for transitional housing, and ensuring additional funding for safety net services, such as mental health and substance use treatment. The County seeks continued cooperation with the state and other stakeholders to launch and sustain the Ridgeview Supportive Residential Campus community.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

Arapahoe County is committed to providing public health services that are data-informed and based on best practices and community input. Core public health programs such as immunizations, food safety, water quality, family planning, access to healthy and affordable foods, and community health education are crucial for creating healthy environments where all residents can thrive. The County supports increased state and federal funding for public health services that can be flexibly used to meet the unique needs of Arapahoe County. The County supports policy efforts that protect public health funding, provide funding flexibility to address emergent issues, and safeguard the workforce. The County also supports the ability of counties to set fees for services, licenses, and permits to address operational costs.

## ENVIRONMENT

Arapahoe County supports advancing policies and programs that conserve resources, protect the environment, and safeguard our climate in order to build a sustainable, just, and resilient community. The County supports programs that help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. The County also supports collaboration between state and federal government agencies and local governments to advance local climate action.





# Stay Informed

# Commissioners

## COMMISSIONER NEWS

Get updates from your County Commissioners about recent news and upcoming events in your district and throughout the County. Stay informed about how we work toward providing the best quality of life for our citizens.

**SIGN UP**

Visit [arapahoeco.gov/commissionernews](http://arapahoeco.gov/commissionernews) to sign up.

## MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Learn more about how Arapahoe County government works by visiting our Legistar portal. This lets you follow our Commissioners' calendars and agendas, sit in (virtually) on live public meetings, and watch recordings of past sessions.

**VIEW**

The portal can be searched by days and times, departments, or topics; see all options by visiting [arapahoeco.gov/agendas](http://arapahoeco.gov/agendas)



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# Elected Officials

# Representation



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Arapahoe County contracts with Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs, a professional lobbyist, for state advocacy activities. The Director of the Commissioners' Office coordinates federal and state intergovernmental relations, in partnership with the Director of Human Services, County Attorney, Director of Community Resources, Director of Public Health, and Director of Public Works & Development.

As a member of Colorado Counties, Inc., Colorado Counties Acting Together, and the National Association of Counties, Arapahoe County relies on those organization's advocacy teams to provide reliable information on legislative issues and the impact on Colorado's counties and their residents. The County also relies on regional associations and other national organizations to advocate for specific issues of shared local interest.

The Board of County Commissioners relies on independently elected offices to monitor and advocate for legislation germane to their business operations, flagging items that may have an impact on the County's budget. The Board may engage in issues as requested by the elected official or if there is a significant budgetary impact to the organization.

## LOBBYISTS

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