



Board Summary Report

File #: 26-342

Agenda Date: 7/14/2026

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office

Prepared By:
Nico Johnson, Management Analyst, Commissioners' Office

Presenter: Ed Bowditch, Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs; Jenn Cassell, Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs; Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office; Nico Johnson, Management Analyst, Commissioners' Office

Subject:
2:00 PM *2026 Legislative Debrief and 2027 Look Ahead

Purpose and Request:

At this study session, lobbyists from Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs and members of the legislative team will provide an overview of key points from the 2026 legislative session, review significant bills and outcomes, and discuss the County's legislative focus for the remainder of the year.

Alignment with Strategic Plan: Good Governance - Proactively advocate for the County's needs in legislative solutions.

Background and Discussion: As a constitutional subdivision of Colorado state government, Arapahoe County can only exercise those powers specifically expressed in statute or in the constitution. Arapahoe County contracts with Bowditch and Cassell Public Affairs for state advocacy activities. The Director of the Commissioners' Office coordinates federal and state intergovernmental relations, in partnership with the County's legislative team, consisting of the Director of Human Services, the County Attorney, the Director of Community Resources, the Director of Public Works and Development, the Director of Public Health, and the Commissioners' Office Management Analyst focused on state and federal public affairs.

On an annual basis, the Board of County Commissioners adopts legislative principles to guide federal and state advocacy work, evaluating policy positions through the lens of fiscal and operational impacts to Arapahoe County, consistent with its stated strategic plan and legal requirements. The Board also identified ten specific legislative items to focus on during the 2026 session, including:

- Ensure statutory programs, reforms, and services receive sufficient funding so counties can continue to provide required services, without detracting from our core responsibilities.
- Include adequate funding for any new legislation that is expected to be implemented and consider where the state does not need to exceed federal requirements so counties can deliver services as intended.
- Maintain state and federal workforce funding and program oversight with local workforce

- regions (Arapahoe/Douglas Works!) and oppose redistribution to other partners.
- Acquire promised new 18th Judicial District judgeships to manage increased caseloads and mandates.
 - Support upgrades to the Colorado Benefits Management System that prioritize policy and procedural changes in H.R.1 to ensure benefits and resources are administered in a timely manner.
 - Confirm proposed changes to community corrections acceptance and placement criteria best meet the needs of our local community.
 - Support access to diverse and healthy food options offered by small businesses, while prioritizing adherence to food safety options.
 - Oppose legislation related to the built environment that minimizes local expertise, creates inconsistencies, adds undue costs, or results in process delays.
 - Oppose the reduction or elimination of dedicated transportation and housing funds in lieu of funding for other state programs.
 - Prevent further cuts to local public health programs that improve community health outcomes and reduce future state investments by preventing disease outbreaks, ensuring adequate emergency response, keeping childcare facility and restaurants safe, and protecting maternal and child health.

Arapahoe County was actively engaged in legislation affecting the human services, workforce, general government, and housing. Among the County's largest wins were successfully adding local representation on the postsecondary talent development system advisory committee, securing funding for an increase in judicial officers, and playing an integral part in the redesign of Colorado's Human Services operations.

During the 2026 legislative session, Arapahoe County tracked 31, or 5% of the 626 bills that were introduced and adopted positions on 28 - a 20% decrease in positions taken during the 2025 session. Of the 18 bills the County either supported, opposed, or proposed amendments to, we saw a 72% success rate, which is a 15% increase from 2025.

Staff will provide general updates to the County's legislative principles for 2027. The Board will be asked to provide feedback on the general direction of the principles, so that staff can return at a later date with a more substantive draft for review.

Alternatives: This is an informational session.

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Alignment with Strategic Implementation Strategies: N/A

Staff Recommendation: N/A

Concurrence: N/A