



2024 Legislative Issue Form

To propose a CCI legislative issue, please complete this form.

Feel free to use more than one page and include any supplemental materials.

1.) Contact Information (of person bringing forth issue):

- a. **Name:** Carrie Geitner
- b. **Title:** Commissioner – District 2
- c. **County:** El Paso
- d. **Phone Number:** (813) 435-0896
- e. **E-Mail Address:** carriegeitner@elpasoco.com

2.) Issue/Problem to be addressed (What is the problem this legislation is seeking to solve?)

The responsibility for providing a courthouse represents one of the largest capital obligations a county must fulfill. As the number of caseloads increases, so does the number of judges and support staff that are required to use a courthouse facility. An ever-increasing judicial footprint strains a county's ability to fulfill their obligation to construct new or expand existing facilities to house additional staff. Large, medium, and small counties alike struggle to pay or finance these costly construction projects. Together these issues contribute to operational and safety impacts to the performance of judicial activities, which can cause an erosion in the efficiency of the delivery of services that citizens expect from the court system.

The State of Colorado plays a large role in the county court system, but counties alone bear the financial responsibility of constructing a large capital asset. However, the State of Colorado can provide some permissive relief in this area by leveraging its preexisting debt management skillset, solid credit rating, and experience issuing certificates of participation to partner with counties to fulfill the obligation to construct new or expand existing courthouses.

3.) Background on this Issue/Problem (How did this come to be? Why are you seeking a legislative remedy?)

The Colorado Constitution requires a county court building to be constructed in each county. State law also requires that each county court facility be provided, maintained, and secured at the expense of the county (C.R.S. Colorado Revised Statutes C.R.S 30-11-104 (1)(a). From time to time, the State has stepped in to help counties pay for courthouse repair, renovation, improvement, or expansion needs (H.B. 14-1096.) This relief is much appreciated.

For counties facing constructing a new or expanding an existing courthouse, the cost could easily run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. The Terry R. Harris Judicial Complex consists of two towers (south and west) and has a total square footage of 365,765. The current cost per square foot for a courthouse is approximately \$600/sq. and the total cost to rebuild would be roughly \$220,000,000. Without some type of available financing, counties would not be able to do much when it comes to improvements, as they do not have the same experience, credit rating, or debt reporting infrastructure as the State.

4.) Proposed Solution/Legislative Remedy to this issue.

Luckily, a model already exists to address these needs. This legislation would establish a framework to help counties fund their courthouse new construction or expansion projects through a model like the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program as found in C.R.S. 22-43.7. The BEST program provides “an annual amount of funding in the form of competitive grants to school districts” to construct or renovate new or existing schools.

Counties would first be responsible for demonstrating their need for a new courthouse or an expansion through independent and third-party studies. Counties and the Judicial branch would be required to also demonstrate that all reasonable attempts have been made to gain space efficiency out of any pre-existing facilities.

Please submit this completed form to Brittney Becerra at bbecerra@ccionline.org

By Friday, July 7.



Once all demonstration requirements have been fulfilled, a county could apply to the State for assistance through a Courthouse Capital Construction Assistance fund funded through C.O.P. executed by the Colorado Treasurer's Office. The General Assembly and counties in the program would be responsible for covering the debt service costs.

5.) Have you explored a non-legislative solution to this problem?

Partnering with the State to access the State's C.O.P. knowledge, credit rating, and borrowing power through a competitive process would require a legislative solution.

6.) Statutory Citation to be modified AND proposed/revised language (The Colorado Revised Statute is available for free at [this link](#), by selecting "Colorado Revised Statutes").

This could either be accomplished by revising C.R.S. 22-43.7 to include counties (along with a separate funding stream, broad composition, etc.) and courthouses as eligible applicants and projects. However, a new section may be advisable.

7.) Relationship of this issue to County Commissioner's roles and/or authorities.

This has a direct impact on the County Commissioner's roles and responsibilities. County Commissioners are required to provide a courthouse facility to house district court judges. Any assistance the State can provide funding the construction of new courthouses or the expansion of existing facilities alleviates one of the largest capital construction obligations a county faces.

8.) Has this proposal been approved by the Board of County Commissioners?

Yes, this proposal has been approved by the Board of County Commissioners

9.) List any potential Proponents/Opponents & their perspective; indicate any groups/individuals with whom you have already discussed this issue.

The El Paso County Board of Commissioners, along with county administration, is supportive of this concept. El Paso County staff has started discussions with the State Treasurer's Office and other relevant parties to gauge interest and identify funding streams.

10.) Have you visited with your legislator(s) about this proposal? What was their reaction? Are members of your delegation likely to sponsor, support, or oppose this proposal?

El Paso County is in preliminary discussions with delegation members. The Board authorized this idea on 06/27/2023.

11.) Anticipated Fiscal Impact (to counties, state, other stakeholders, etc.).

If El Paso County had to finance the construction of a new courthouse, it would cost over \$200M.

12.) Please list the local subject matter experts CCI staff can follow up with for more information on this proposal.

Ryan Parsell, Executive Director, El Paso County Government Affairs.

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13.) If your county is submitting multiple issue forms, please rank each issue.

1/2

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