



COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

CCI
COLORADO COUNTIES, INC.
Educate · Advocate · Empower



**Please Vote NO on SB22-230
Mandated Collective Bargaining for County Governments**

Sponsors: Sen. Fenberg & Moreno, Rep. Esgar

SB22-230 would implement a top-down, mandated collective bargaining obligation on county governments across Colorado and endanger our working relationship with our employees. **To be clear, counties do NOT oppose collective bargaining – in fact, several counties have embraced collective bargaining** and it is working in those jurisdictions. The hiring and compensation of employees is a matter of local control and collective bargaining should be a county-by-county decision.

Counties are already facing tightened budgets due to the continued COVID crisis, increased operating costs (gas, inflation, etc.) and supply chain issues. County property tax revenues are finite in nature and cannot be increased without a citizen vote. This unfunded mandate will necessitate additional staff time, legal help, human resources expertise, dispute resolution costs and ultimately higher wages and additional benefits. **This unfunded mandate may result in cuts to essential services to our citizens.**

Another major concern is that while the legislation contains a prohibition on an exclusive representative calling for a strike, it may not actually prohibit employees from striking. County employees are front line providers for services such as distributing cash assistance, plowing snow off roads, enforcing laws and protecting the public. **If county employees were to walk off the job during a labor dispute it could very well threaten the health and safety of the public.**

Furthermore, there are also state budgetary impacts that must be considered as counties are responsible for delivering a wide number of state services (elections, human services, courts and district attorneys, law enforcement, public health, etc.). The state shares in the cost of providing these services and if counties are forced to pay higher wages and benefits, there will be a direct fiscal impact to the state as well.

County governments have a proud employment tradition in Colorado. The General Assembly has provided no evidence that such a massive shift in public employment policy is warranted or necessary. This top-down collective bargaining approach is bad for local government and bad for Colorado.

Please Vote NO on Mandated County Collective Bargaining

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For more information, please visit: ccionline.org/advocacy/collective-bargaining/

The Post Editorial

Counties not ready for new unions

What little remains of a valiant effort to give more public employees in Colorado the right to collectively bargain should be tabled and tried again next year.

Retrospectively we know from Colorado WENS — the 2020 bill to unionize 30,000 state employees — that the sky will not fall if other public employees are finally granted the right to gather their collective efforts toward negotiating better wages, benefits and working conditions.

But while the sky did not fall with the passage of House Bill 1153, the three-year employment contract signed in 2021 did cost the state quite a bit of money, according to The Colorado Sun the 3% raises for three years, associated benefits and a \$15 minimum wage will cost taxpayers about \$115 million.

State employees would have likely seen raises anyway, so those wage wins likely can't all be attributed to the new union. Nor are we arguing that state employees were not due a pay hike. The bill itself was estimated to require an additional 45 state employees at a cost of \$6.6 million to navigate the new employment system.

Additionally, the new union is taking about 1.5% of employees' salaries so it can function, although individuals can opt-out and resign from the union if they cannot afford that amount of money.

The 2022 bill, which was still in draft form Friday afternoon, would only apply to county employees in Colorado. Originally, the bill was expected to include a much broader range of employees, giving those working for cities, public hospitals, public universities and others the right to collectively bargain. However, it seems likely that only counties will remain after an intense lobbying effort from other entities and opposition to some unspecified parts of the bill from Gov. Jared Polis and other Democrats and Republicans.

Colorado's cities are guaranteed local control under Colorado's Constitution, and Home Rule means that cities are left to handle matters of municipal concern. Because nothing is of more concern to a municipality than the city budget, we are sympathetic to concerns that mandating collective bargaining rights for employees may infringe on city rights.

Tony Frank, the chancellor of the Colorado State University System, argued that while he knows some employees including adjunct professors across the state need better wages and benefits. Frank said Colorado's universities are already operating on scant state dollars, and these types of budget changes will result directly in either in other funding cuts or tuition increases.

So in the end county governments, as entities that operate closely with the state, will be left holding the purse.

Counties are arguing that granting employees collective bargaining rights will cost them millions. Counties, which are primarily funded by property taxes, will see their revenue rise quite a bit as assessed values throughout the state skyrocket in coming years, however, we agree that if the state is going to dramatically change labor laws it should be a less prescriptive process.

The draft bill that The Denver Post received includes a whole host of very specific requirements if a county entity — think sheriff and fire departments — opt to unionize. Most concerning is the inclusion of a requirement that disputes be settled through binding arbitration.

We've seen both the good — increased wages and benefits for essential employees who save lives — and the bad — entitled and impossible to fire bad apples — of public unions in this state.

Let's proceed with caution.

Members of The Denver Post's editorial board are Megan Schrader, editor of the editorial pages; Lee Ann Colacioppo, editor; Justin Mock, CFO; Bill Reynolds, general manager/senior vp circulation and production; Bob Kinney, vice president of information technology; and TJ Hutchinson, systems editor.

THE Durango HERALD

County commissioners unite to oppose collective bargaining

Monday, May 2, 2022

Montezuma and La Plata counties share a border, some telecommunications and health services, and a regional economy centered on our beautiful landscapes such as the La Plata Mountains and Mesa Verde National Park. And now, we share in a united front to oppose SB22-230, proposed state legislation that is being considered by the General Assembly. It would implement a top-down collective bargaining obligation on county governments across Colorado and could jeopardize our working relationships with our employees. Collective bargaining (a required negotiation process that happens after a workforce votes to unionize) has the potential to create an adversarial relationship between government and its workforce, instead of the cooperative relationship we currently share.

This bill only covers county governments and that makes no sense to us as your elected county commissioners.

Collective bargaining will necessitate additional staff time, legal resources, human resources expertise, dispute resolution costs and, ultimately, higher personnel costs. A conservative estimate is that an additional \$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000 per year would be needed just to set the program up in Montezuma County and \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000 in La Plata County. Counties are primarily funded by property, oil and gas, and sales taxes, and this bill offers no money to help counties offset these expenses. Thus, we would have to cut into essential services to pay for it or raise taxes.

Counties, just like businesses and your local households, are facing increased operating costs due to many complex factors including supply chain issues. Unlike the Front Range counties and bigger cities, we don't have a deep bench to pull from to cover essential services for residents in the case of strike.

To be clear, counties do not oppose collective bargaining as a policy tool - in fact several counties around the state have embraced collective bargaining and it is working well in those jurisdictions. But, those are local decisions that should be left up to county commissions and their employees.

We are two diverse counties that work together on many things for the good of our residents. Mandating policy from the top-down and at the 11th hour in the legislative session will have dramatic impacts for our counties. We urge a no vote and ask you to write your senator and representative.

Jim Candelaria, Kent Lindsay, Gerald Koppenhafer
Montezuma County commissioners

Matt Salka, Marsha Porter-Norton, Clyde Church
La Plata County commissioners