

Mr. Smith, Don't forget! You have a court date on Mon. February 19 in Liberty Court on 123 Main St. at 2 p.m. Failure to appear could result in your arrest.



Ms. Lopez, you have a court appearance on Wed. February 21 in Justice Court, Colorado, 44 Court Way. Free childcare is available in Room 2B.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 18-1081

A STATE-WIDE, TEXT MESSAGE-BASED COURT DATE REMINDER PROGRAM

Why does Colorado need a state-wide court date reminder program?

- Colorado is facing a jail overcrowding crisis that sheriffs need help solving**
Across the state, sheriffs report dangerously overcrowded jails. For example, Pueblo County Jail is operating at 151% capacity and Alamosa County Jail is at 147% capacity.
- People who fail to appear (FTA) in court are big contributors of jail overcrowding**
More than half of Colorado's jail population is pre-trial, with a significant percentage incarcerated solely because they missed a court date. In 2004, Jefferson County reported that 25% of its jail population was incarcerated solely for failure to appear on minor offenses.
- Counties get hit hard financially when people FTA**
Jail beds are expensive and should be reserved for people who pose a public safety threat. Yet, in a six month period ending Dec. 2017, Arapahoe County spent \$311,512.00 housing defendants held solely for failure to appear (434 inmates held for a total of 3,386 days). This amount does not include costs of judicial staff, law enforcement, and economic impact on communities.
- A simple court date reminder is enough to get most people to court**
Very few people miss court intentionally. Most people miss court because of work or childcare obligations, lack of transportation, or because they simply forget. Court date reminders are the only evidence-based practice proven to reduce failures to appear.

How would Colorado benefit from a court date reminder program?

- Jail overcrowding would be substantially and safely decreased.**
In 2005, Jefferson County saw a 52% reduction in FTAs six months after starting their reminder program—translating to 425 fewer FTA warrants during that six-month period. Douglas County's reminder program decreased FTA rates by 50% between 2009 and 2015. During 2015, the program called 4,815 defendants and of those, only 70 had an FTA and resulting jail time.
- Counties would save thousands with each avoided FTA.**
Garfield County has estimated that the overall cost of a FTA is more than \$2,000—money the county can save with a simple court reminder. Jefferson County has saved \$400,000 annually as a direct result of their FTA reductions due to court reminders.
- Government efficiency would increase.**
By reducing the number of bench warrants and avoiding unnecessary jailing, court reminders save time and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of police, sheriffs, court staff, pretrial services staff and public defenders, all while saving taxpayer dollars.
- Text message reminders have significant advantages over call and mail reminders**
Though any reminder is better than no reminder at all, text message reminders are most effective. They are opened 98% of the time, a much better contact rate than phone calls or mailed letters.