

# BECOME AN ADVOCATE - COUNTY

Colorado has 64 counties. The Counties are subdivisions of the state government and are responsible for administering many critical state programs at the local level.

## WHO ARE YOUR LOCAL COUNTY OFFICIALS & WHAT DO THEY DO?

**\*County Commissioners:** Most counties have 3-5 County Commissioners, who serve 4 year terms – some are “at large” for the whole county; others are “districted.” They oversee the county budget, county administration, planning & zoning, office of emergency management, human services, public health departments, county courts, county roads, and jails. Some also address include libraries, parks, and permitting. They can pass County ordinances (or laws) if they do not conflict with state or federal law but may be superseded by Municipal ordinances in home rule cities. <http://ccionline.org> or your local county government website.

**Human Services:** Reports of child abuse, elder abuse or abuse against people with disabilities; Administers poverty and disability based benefits, child support enforcement, & employment assistance.

**Planning & Zoning:** Decisions about permissible and impermissible land use in a county, including a Master Plan, inspections, and point of contact for development in the county.

**County Clerk & Recorder:** Clerks are responsible for the administration of elections in Colorado. They oversee marriage licenses, record real estate titles, and record automobile title and registration. <http://www.clerkandrecorder.org>

**County Assessor:** Assessors are responsible for valuing real and personal property at a fair, accurate and professional manner. It is the basis for determining property taxation and is important for both fairness to property owner and has a significant impact on county revenue. <http://e-caa.com>

**County Treasurer:** County Treasurers are responsibility for collecting, accounting for and disbursing county funds. They collect all property taxes, disburse school funds to school districts in the county, and collect some sale taxes. The treasurer can sell property if taxes are delinquent. In some county this person is also the **public trustee**. <http://www.e-ccta.org>

**County Sheriff:** The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of the county. They are responsible for maintaining the peace and enforcing state criminal laws. They are required to serve process, subpoenas and writs as directed by the court. The Sheriff operates the county jail, and serves as fire warden for fires in the county. <https://coloradosheriffs.org>

**County Coroner:** The Coroner can be responsible for declaring death, cause and manner of death, conducting autopsies, taking custody of bodies, notifying next of kin and providing death certificates. <http://www.coloradocoroners.org>

Most of your advocacy will be done through your County Commissioners, however you may find that you have rights to challenge or appeal actions taken by other county officers in state law.

1. **MEET WITH THEM PERSONALLY.** Get to know your County Officials, regardless of party, ideally before you need to advocate on any particular topic.
2. **WHEN DO THEY MEET?** Meeting schedules, frequency and topics vary by County. Call or go online to find out when and where your County Commissioners meet.
3. **SHOW UP - OPEN MEETINGS & OPEN RECORDS.** Your County Commissioners are subject to the Open meetings requirement which means all meetings (date, time and agenda) are required to be publicly posted. You have a right to attend (unless executive session) and get copies of the minutes or public county documents.
4. **TESTIFY.** Public testimony is allowed and welcomed, but may be regulated as to time, place, topic at hand and duration. Your testimony might sway votes and can be the basis for legal challenges in the future. Best practice includes your name, where you live and a brief explanation (stories or data) about why you support or oppose.
5. **CALL, EMAIL OR ASK FOR A MEETING.** If you care about issue up for a vote or want to get an item put on a meeting agenda, you can call, email or schedule a meeting before the vote.
6. **PUBLIC OPINION & PUBLIC ACTION.** You can grow attention to a local decision through Petitions, Op Eds, Facebook Groups, Twitter, local newspapers, radio station, press releases, press conference and organizing with allied groups.