



City of Needles

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June 23, 2026

The Honorable Blanca Pacheco
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, 4510
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 1821 — California Public Records Act: Methods of Submission, Fees, and Agency Response Time — SUPPORT (As Amended June 10, 2026)

Dear Assemblymember Pacheco:

On behalf of the City of Needles, I write in support of Assembly Bill 1821, which would make several important updates to the California Public Records Act, including preserving the clarification that certain agency response periods are calculated in business days rather than calendar days. As amended June 10, 2026, the bill also addresses designated methods for submitting public records requests and limited fee authority for commercial use requests and requests determined by a court to have been submitted with malicious intent.

Public agencies are committed to transparency and providing timely access to public records. At the same time, the volume, complexity, and format of public records have changed significantly. Requests now routinely involve large volumes of email, text messages, electronic files, audio and video recordings, body-worn camera footage, and other digital records that must be searched, reviewed, and, when legally required, redacted before release. This work often requires coordination among multiple departments, information technology staff, legal counsel, and records personnel.

Current law requires an agency to make its initial determination within 10 calendar days, with a possible 14-calendar-day extension under unusual circumstances. Because those timeframes include weekends and holidays, agencies may not receive the full number of working days needed to conduct a careful and legally compliant review. AB 1821 would provide a more practical and consistent framework by changing those periods to 10 business days and 14 business days. This important change remains in the bill as amended June 10, 2026.

The June 10 amendments also recognize the importance of clear intake procedures for public records requests. AB 1821 would require agencies to designate a physical office location and specified email address for submission of requests, while allowing agencies to identify other reasonable submission methods, such as a mailing address or online portal. This would help provide clarity to both requesters and agencies, reduce confusion about whether a request has been properly submitted, and support timely processing through established public-facing channels.

This adjustment is especially important for local agencies where staffing is limited and public records responsibilities are often carried out by employees who also support public meetings, elections, boards and commissions, agenda management, contract routing, records management, and other core services. A business-day standard would not reduce an agency's obligation to respond to records requests or make disclosable records available. Rather, it would help ensure that agencies have a reasonable opportunity to identify responsive records, determine whether exemptions apply, protect confidential or legally protected information, and provide accurate responses.

AB 1821 would also provide limited authority to recover search and review costs for commercial use requests, while exempting requests made by educational or non-commercial scientific institutions, government agencies, and representatives of the news media. The bill would also allow an agency to petition the superior court for a determination that a request was submitted with malicious intent before imposing search and review fees in that circumstance. These provisions are aimed at preserving access for public-interest requesters while recognizing the significant staff time and public resources that may be required to process certain requests.

For the City of Needles, public records requests have become more voluminous and complex, requiring more interdepartmental coordination in recent years. In FY 2026, the agency received a 200 percent increase in requests, and many requests required review of emails, video footage, contracts, and personnel-related records. Even when staff work diligently, weekends and holidays can materially reduce the actual time available to complete the required review. AB 1821 would provide a more realistic timeline while preserving the public's right to access disclosable public records.

California's local agency clerks, records managers, and other public records professionals see firsthand how important it is to balance prompt public access with careful legal compliance. AB 1821 supports that balance. It recognizes that public records work is not simply a matter of locating a document; it frequently requires thoughtful review to protect privacy, privileged communications, confidential information, and other records exempt from disclosure under state or federal law.

For these reasons, the City of Needles supports AB 1821 and we thank you for your leadership on this most important issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact Janet Jernigan, Mayor at 760-326-5700, or email jjernigan@cityofneedles.com, should you have any questions or wish to discuss our position.

Sincerely,

Janet Jernigan
Mayor
City of Needles

cc:
Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Steve Padilla
Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez
California Municipal Clerks Association