

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Via Fax: 916-558-3160

June 19, 2013

Dear Gov. Brown:

We are a broad coalition of media organizations joining our colleagues at the California Newspaper Publishers Association to urge you to veto SB 71 and AB 76 if either weakens the California Public Records Act. Although we are encouraged by your announcement late today supporting the public's right to know, we were stunned by this blatant and unwarranted attack.

As experts on compliance with the our state's current Public Records Act, we can assure you that many local jurisdictions will not – as some legislators suggest – voluntarily abide by best practices. In the real world, cities, counties, schools and government boards already spend abundant time and money trying not to comply with the act. Inordinate delays are typical, illegal denials common.

The voluntary system originally proposed under SB 71 and AB 76 will not save money, either. Instead, it would force news organizations and governments into expensive legal battles. This will burden governments even further, and place restraints on the free press.

We are especially concerned about the electronic records provision. This often is the simplest way for a government body to fulfill a request, saving time and trees. It also allows journalists to quickly analyze trends and spot aberrations hidden in the millions of rows and columns. If this is not an attempt to withhold public information, why make it harder for all to do their jobs?

California already is known for having one of the weakest public records laws in the nation. This is a shameful ranking that deserves your attention.

Sincerely,

Jim Boren, Executive Editor/Senior Vice President  
The Fresno Bee

Ken Brusic, Editor and Senior Vice President  
Orange County Register

Greg Burton, Executive Editor

The Desert Sun, Palm Springs

Ward Bushee, Editor and Executive Vice President  
San Francisco Chronicle

David J. Butler, Editor and Senior Vice President  
San Jose Mercury News, Oakland Tribune, Contra Costa Times and sister papers;  
Vice President for News, MediaNews Group,  
Representing the company's 31 dailies in California

Sandra Duerr, Executive Editor and Vice President  
The Tribune, San Luis Obispo

Nels Jensen, Editor/VP of News & Content  
The Press-Enterprise, Riverside

Mark Katches, Editorial Director  
The Center for Investigative Reporting, Berkeley  
The nation's oldest and largest nonprofit investigative unit

Scott Lewis, CEO  
Voice of San Diego

John Moore, Editor  
Ventura County Star

Kathleen Richards and Robert Gammon, Co-Editors  
East Bay Express

Norberto Santana, Editor-in-Chief  
Voice of Orange County

Russ Stanton, Vice President, Content  
Southern California Public Radio

Joyce Terhaar, Executive Editor & SVP  
The Sacramento Bee and [sacbee.com](http://sacbee.com)