



County Administrative Office
Governmental & Legislative Affairs

Josh Candelaria
Director

February 12, 2015

The Honorable Cheryl Brown
California State Assembly
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 280 (Brown) – As introduced February 11, 2015 – SPONSOR

Dear Assemblymember Brown,

The County of San Bernardino is pleased to sponsor Assembly Bill 280. This legislation would increase the small claims jurisdictional limits from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for public entities. AB 280 would also align public and private small claims jurisdictional limits.

Under existing law, a private party (natural person) can pursue an action in law for damages not exceeding \$10,000 in small claims court, but a public entity cannot sue its debtor for an unpaid bill in the amount of \$10,000 or for a series of such bills totaling \$10,000. Private parties have enjoyed a higher threshold for small claims filings than public entities since 2005, with limits increasing from \$5,000 to \$7,500 in 2005 and up to \$10,000 in 2012.

Litigation costs incurred by public entities handling contested collections cases where the debt at issue is more than the \$5,000, but less than \$10,000 often result in attorney's fees equaling, and occasionally even exceeding, the judgment awarded. In San Bernardino County last year, over eight percent of cases referred for collection fell between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Under AB 280, the County and plaintiffs would save \$500,000 collectively on an ongoing basis.

AB 280 would provide debt relief to consumers who owe more than \$5,000 to a public entity, in that they would be allowed to have their cases heard in small claims court, preventing them the cost of retaining legal representation. In some instances, attorney fees to try these cases can approach, equal, and occasionally even exceed, the judgment awarded. It is also our experience that many individuals owing over \$5,000 in debt are unable to retain an attorney to defend themselves.

This legislation would allow public entities to increase efficiencies, save costs to public agencies and consumers, as well as provide relief to our overburdened court system. Reducing litigation costs incurred by counties and other municipalities pursuing civil, monetary judgments in collections cases under \$10,000 is a legitimate public policy goal.

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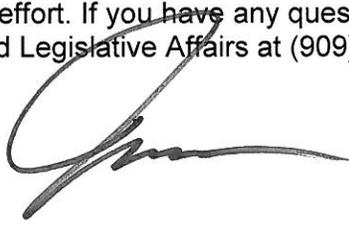
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For these reasons, the County of San Bernardino is pleased to sponsor AB 280. We thank you for championing this effort. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Ramos', written in a cursive style.

JAMES RAMOS
Board of Supervisors Chairman
Third District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino