

ARKANSAS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARIES TRANSPARENCY



**ARKANSAS CENTER FOR
RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

The Problem

Most of Arkansas's 75 counties do not publish elected officials' salaries online. **Lack of oversight can lead to corruption.** Taxpayers have a right to know how the government spends their tax dollars.

- Only 2 counties publish elected officials' salaries online.
- 73 counties do not publish elected officials' salaries online.
- Only limited information on elected officials' salaries is available through third-party entities.
- The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette publishes information at <https://www.arkansasonline.com/right2know/>, but only on a few counties.
- The Association of Arkansas Counties publishes a survey of official county salaries at https://www.arcounties.org/site/assets/files/5579/2020_salary_survey_complete.pdf, but a better practice would be for each county to publish the information on its website, making salary data easily accessible to residents and the media.

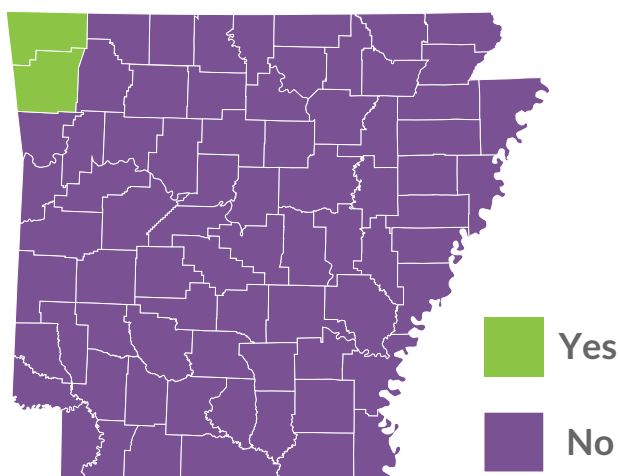
Example

Craighead County Clerk Kade Holliday was arrested on June 29, 2020, and subsequently charged with 13 felonies related to theft of more than \$1.4 million in public funds. A legislative audit on June 24 revealed 12 transfers from the public payroll account Holliday managed to Holliday's own bank accounts from January through June.

The *Arkansas Times* reports that Holliday had earlier made a \$500,000 gift commitment to Arkansas State University (ASU) in September 2019, raising speculations that he may have donated some of the money he stole to ASU. Craighead County does not publish elected officials' salaries online. If it did, the public might have been able to question how a young public official earning \$68,000 annually was able to make a \$500,000 gift commitment.

If the public knew what Holliday earned as county clerk, his gift commitment might have raised a red flag to ASU, the media, or even Arkansas residents about how he planned to fund his commitment. This public scrutiny might have prevented Holliday from embezzling public funds or led to earlier detection.

Arkansas Counties That Publish Elected Officials' Salaries



Source: Ajayi, Joyce and Kalulu, Mavuto "Access Arkansas: County-Level Web Transparency," 3rd ed. Arkansas Center for Research in Economics. [Forthcoming, 2021]

The Solution

County governments should publish elected officials' salaries online, and include officials' names, not just job titles.

The Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC) publishes a County Government Salary Survey that shows the salaries of elected officials at https://www.arcounties.org/site/assets/files/5579/2020_salary_survey_complete.pdf. If counties cannot directly publish the salaries on their websites, they should link to the AAC salary survey so that citizens can easily access the data. The AAC survey should be augmented with public officials' names, not just salaries by job title.

California provides the strongest model to follow. See <https://publicpay.ca.gov/> and <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamandrzejewski/2020/05/19/why-california-is-in-trouble--340000-public-employees-with-100000-paychecks-cost-taxpayers-45-billion/#1832794e5fb8>

Frequently Asked Questions

Question

Answer

Which Arkansas counties publish elected officials' salaries?

Benton and Washington.

Why don't all Arkansas counties publish elected officials' salaries?

Because current law does not require them to.

Why publish elected officials' salaries on county websites when my constituents do not have broadband internet access?

Governor Hutchinson's [Arkansas State Broadband Plan](#) is working toward bringing broadband internet to all population centers of 500 people or more by 2022. Journalists and other citizen advocates who already have strong internet connections through broadband or cellular data can provide oversight now.

Won't publishing elected officials' salaries on county websites consume more taxpayer resources?

Not really. Even if the county does not have the means to operate its own website, it can use a platform such as Facebook to quickly and easily publish elected officials' salaries or to direct constituents to AAC salary survey. A minor expenditure of additional administrative resources could save counties millions in waste and fraud.

Shouldn't people be able to keep their salaries private?

Not when they are paid by the public. Taxpayers need to know if their resources are being spent prudently. Public officials are accountable to their constituents.

Suggested Reading

ACRE Resources

- Ajayi, Joyce and Kalulu, Mavuto “*Access Arkansas: County-Level Web Transparency*,” 2nd ed. Arkansas Center for Research in Economics. 2019.
- Ajayi, Joyce. “[To Prevent Abuse, Make Government Data More Open](#)” Arkansas Online, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 14 August 2020

Additional Resources

- Andrzejewski, Adam. “Why California is in Trouble-340,000 Public Employees With \$100,000+ Paychecks Cost Taxpayers \$45 Billion.” Forbes, 19 May 2020 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamandrzejewski/2020/05/19/why-california-is-in-trouble--340000-public-employees-with-100000-paychecks-cost-taxpayers-45-billion/?sh=4597f6865fb8> [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].
- Association of Arkansas Counties. “Publication Library, 2020.” Arcounties.org. https://www.arcounties.org/site/assets/files/5579/2020_salary_survey_complete.pdf [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].
- Mershon, Matthew “Pulaski Co. employee arrested in fraud scheme involving fake county accident reports” KATV News, 21 June 2016 <https://katv.com/news/local/pulaski-county-employee-arrested-in-fraud-scheme-involving-fake-county-accident-reports>
- Office of Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson. “Arkansas State Broadband Plan” https://governor.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/Arkansas_State_Broadband_Plan_Final_5.15_.19_.pdf [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].
- Simpson, Stephen. “Craighead County clerk arrested, charged with theft of public funds.” Arkansas Online, Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 29 June 2020 <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/jun/29/craighead-county-clerk-arrested-charged-theft-publ/?latest>
- Yee, Betty T. California State Controller. “Government Compensation in California”. State Controller’s Office. <https://publicpay.ca.gov/>. [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].

ACRE Experts



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About ACRE

The Arkansas Center for Research in Economics (ACRE) is an Arkansas focused research center housed in the College of Business at the University of Central Arkansas. ACRE scholars and policy analysts use research and analysis to find solutions for Arkansas's problems. Our research focuses on barriers to employment, taxes and subsidies, good governance and government transparency.

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