



Case Study SB441

“With the Governor’s signature, another firewall is in place to protect cities, counties and small districts from being hacked and potentially defrauded from losing millions of dollars.”

—Jack Batchelor, former Mayor of Dixon

Opportunity

After a sophisticated criminal scheme nearly cost the City of Dixon 1.3 million dollars, Churchwell White attorneys and legislative advocates chose to view the city’s close-call as a call to action.

Challenge

The attempted fraud utilized unique vendor identification numbers often found in agenda packets posted online in compliance with the California Public Records Act (PRA). However, any attempts to restrict information available to the public, would likely face fierce opposition from the California Newspaper Publishers Association (CNPA).

Solution

Churchwell White legislative advocates worked together with the City of Dixon and California State

Senator Lois Wolk to develop legislation to safeguard and exempt this key financial information from the PRA. Instead of battling with, they proactively engaged the CNPA to find the right balance between protecting the public’s right to access public records and preventing the misuse of that same information to defraud local agencies.

Benefit

SB 441 was signed into law in September 2016 by Governor Brown, and will allow public entities to reduce the risk of falling victim to the type of fraud Dixon faced earlier this year. Churchwell White LLP was able to successfully assist the City of Dixon into turning a bad situation into a positive outcome for public entities throughout California.



Firm

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