

RESOLUTION NO.: 2008-14

SUBJECT: Support for “Safer Community Initiative”

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 17, 2008

RESOLUTION OF THE EL PASO COUNTY **BOARD OF HEALTH**

WHEREAS, the El Paso County Board of Health (“Board of Health”) and El Paso County Department of Health and Environment (“Health Department”) have the legal duty to carry out vital public health programs in El Paso County, Colorado; and,

WHEREAS, the Health Department, as a separate governmental entity from El Paso County, cannot levy any tax or increase any tax to support public health protection programs; and,

WHEREAS, the Health Department, which receives less than 30% of its funding from El Paso County, cannot rely on any increase in financial support from El Paso County, and has, in fact, absorbed substantial decreases in financial support for several years; and,

WHEREAS, the Health Department is restricted by law to charge only direct costs, excluding indirect costs, for many of its services; and,

WHEREAS, traditional public health threats such as flu, plague, and the need for childhood immunizations are increasing in El Paso County; and,

WHEREAS, emerging public health threats such as bioterrorism, West Nile virus, and SARS have greatly increased the need for public health protection services; and,

WHEREAS, after more than a year of research on the outlook for public health and safety services in El Paso County, as well as in the local municipalities, a review of State-mandated public health and safety services, and the backlog of infrastructure needs, Citizens for Effective Government launched the “Safer Community Initiative” to address the public health and safety crisis in El Paso County to examine opportunities for cooperation and consolidation on a regional basis; and,

WHEREAS, El Paso County, and the municipalities therein, must continue to work cooperatively to deliver a full range of public health and safety services to the residents of the County and each municipality, who all receive public health, jail, coroner, court and civil services from El Paso County and the municipalities; and,

WHEREAS, crime trends in El Paso County have risen including home invasions, identity theft, six crimes, and assaults; Colorado Springs Police calls for service are up 137%, but it can respond to only 50% due to a shortage of officers; each Deputy District Attorney handles over 250 felony cases concurrently; the jail population is at capacity; the deputy to prisoner ratio at the jail has increased to dangerous levels from 1 deputy

guarding 35 prisoners to 1 deputy guarding 67 prisoners; persons sentenced for misdemeanors have been released early; infectious disease cases have increased 200% in the past six years; child-care facility health and safety complaints and violations rates are increasing; six community swimming pools were closed due to E.coli in 2007; public health inspections at food establishments do not meet State requirements for frequency due to a reduction in funding while the number of establishments in the region has increased by 25%; the Coroner's facilities have become substandard and unsafe, including no way to control offensive odors throughout the facility due to the autopsy caseload doubling in the past decade; the Colorado Springs Fire Department's workload has increased 72%, and it often cannot maintain 8-minute response times for fires; and, wild land fire response and Emergency Management is not funded to support efficient and effective collaboration between multiple public service agencies in the region; and,

WHEREAS, it is essential that public health and safety agencies are provided with adequate facilities, equipment and staffing to protect our citizens; and,

WHEREAS, we need to protect our region's quality of life by stopping infectious diseases along with protecting our most vulnerable people, including our senior citizens and children, and keeping our public areas safe for our families; and,

WHEREAS, the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners has referred the "Safer Community Initiative" to the ballot on November 4, 2008; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Health desires to encourage voters to approve the "Safer Community Initiative" on November 4, 2008, to support a regional resolution of these public health and safety issues;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE EL PASO COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the El Paso County Board of Health encourages El Paso County voters to approve the "Safer Community Initiative" for a 1% sales tax increase to ensure our local public health and public safety agencies have the resources needed to protect the citizens of El Paso County; and,
2. That the El Paso County Board of Health hereby determines that this Resolution is necessary, and in the best interest of the public health, safety and welfare.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED BY THE EL PASO COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH AT IT'S REGULAR MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 17, 2008.

EL PASO COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH