RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:  (Policy Item:  Yes  No)
Resolution in Support of Legislative Data Bill, AB1624 (Bowen)

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
Assembly Bill 1624 is a proposal for instantaneous legislative information to the public via a computer modem. The bill is supported by over 800 individuals and organizations with no opposition. It will bring the legislative information process up to the present computer era and anyone with a modem and a computer can track the text, history and status of a bill, daily files, vote records and veto messages, as well as California Codes, the California Constitution and all uncodified statutes. The cost of the changeover is minimal and requires only an additional 10 minutes per day to input.

Assemblywoman Bowen has solicited support from the County and it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt this resolution in support.

LIST ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
1. Do not adopt the Resolution. The County will not be added to the list of supporters.

COSTS:  (x) Not Applicable
A. Budgeted current FY
B. Total anticipated costs
C. Required additional funding
D. Internal transfers

SOURCE:  ( ) 4/5ths Vote Required
A. Unanticipated revenues
B. Reserve for contingencies
C. Source description:
Balance in Reserve for Contingencies, if approved:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
List the attachments and number the pages consecutively:
Information re AB 1624

CLERK'S USE ONLY:
Res. No.: 93-498
Vote - Ayes: 4
Absent: 0
Noes: 0
Approved: 4
Denied: 0
Minute Order Attached: No
No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date:

ATTEST:  MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
          County of Mariposa, State of California
          By: Deputy

9-28AB1624  Action Form Revised 5/92

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:
This item on agenda as:
✓ Recommended
☐ Not Recommended
☐ For Policy Determination
☐ Submitted with Comment
☐ Returned for Further Action

Comment:
October 8, 1993

Assemblywoman Debra Bowen
Fifty-third District
State Capitol
P. O. Box 942849
Sacramento, California 94249-0001

Dear Assemblywoman Bowen,

At its meeting of September 28, 1993, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action to support AB 1624, your legislative data bill.

You will find a copy of Mariposa County Resolution No. 93-498 enclosed.

Sincerely,

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

Enclosure

cc: Assemblywoman Margaret Snyder
Senator Dan McCorquodale
California State Association of Counties
Regional Council of Rural Counties
Imagine being able to gain instantaneous computer access to bills and proposals facing the California State Legislature, free of charge. That would be possible under a measure by first-term Assemblywoman Debra Bowen (D-Torrance/Marina del Rey).

The premise behind the bill is simple: The information on bills moving through the Legislature is public information, paid for by the taxpayer, and there's no reason why the public shouldn't have timely and inexpensive electronic access to it.

What kind of information are we talking about?
1) Assembly and Senate Daily File
2) Each and every bill as introduced, amended, enrolled, and chaptered
3) Bill History & Status
4) All Vote Records & Veto Messages
5) California Codes & Constitution
6) Uncodified Statutes

Are we giving new information to the public?
Not really. All of this data is given away for free in paper form upon request by calling or visiting the bill room at the State Capitol or by contacting a representative's office.

Won't the computer system cost a fortune?
Absolutely not! The state is already making this data available on tape to private vendors. The only additional expense is a security computer that acts as a "firewall" needed to protect the integrity of the state's original data, and that computer is being donated by a private party who gains nothing financially by doing so.

Shouldn't the state charge for this data?
There are many reasons not to charge:
1) This is public information. The taxpayer paid state workers' salaries to create this data and $25 million for the Legislative Data Center. Why should they have to pay again to actually receive the data?
2) We don't charge individuals who get paper copies of the bills from the bill room.
3) We "give away" other state information such as the kiosks that are being placed around the state that allow the user to access state information such as renewing a driver's license, birth certificate, pay a parking ticket, etc. This is the same concept.
How does it work, technically? What about "hackers"?
The data is currently entered into the Legislative Inquiry System (LIS) for members and staff to use. After it is entered into the LIS it will automatically be sent to the "firewall" computer that acts as a security barrier only, from which anyone with a computer and modem will be able to access the data. By transferring the data to a separate system, there is no path through which a "hacker" could access the legislature's system. Since all of the data is already compiled by legislative staff, no additional staff time will be required.

Could the state actually save money?
The state currently sells this data to private vendors. So, the Legislative Data Center (LDC) could lose some $300,000 annually from the sale of that data. (In contrast to LDC's $25 million budget, though, this is a nominal amount of money.) However, many of the customers of the vendors are...state and local agencies! State agencies bought this data from the private vendors for over $285,000 last year -- an expense that could be eliminated under AB 1624. Virtually every county and city purchases this data too, at a cost of $250,000 for the cities alone, in order to keep up with the changes in the legislature. Under AB 1624, these entities could obtain this data free of charge. In the end, the state could save money by providing this data electronically.

Is this a "California first?"
Not even close. California, home of the Silicon Valley and computer information technology, is sadly behind the times. Thirty-three other states offer inexpensive public access to legislative data. Additionally, the White House, the U.S. Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, and many defense and educational institutions are already communicating with the public by sending data via the Internet.

What is the "Internet?"
The Internet is a non-profit, nonproprietary cooperative public network of networks that has been in existence for over 10 years. It is simply a link-up of many computers so that they can exchange data.

How will it work for me at home?
Anyone would be able to access this information from their home computer and modem through one of the many services such as Internet, CompuServe, America On-line, GENie, Delphi, or one of the thousands of bulletin board systems throughout the State. In addition, the public could gain access at any University of California campus, some state universities and community colleges, K-12 schools, many businesses and local libraries.
What is the bottom line?
Today, it's easier to get plans to the stealth bomber than it is to get information about what's going on in the state Legislature. Local governments and private citizens don't have timely and inexpensive access to legislative information. AB 1624 provides both by bringing government back to the people by making the data widely available at little to no cost. Public access to the public's data will occur when this bill is enacted, enabling the public to become participants in their government.

Why not propose this idea in a resolution?
It has come to my attention that various members have requested the electronic distribution of this data in the past, but no system has been developed to date. I believe that the Legislative Data Center needs the legislature to set a policy, especially one which states that the taxpayer will not have to pay for the data twice.

Why not set up a bulletin board system run by the state?
A more sophisticated system would be ideal, but the fact is, California is not in a position to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on such a system. There is no reason the state could not set up such a system when it is able to, financially. In the mean time, why not implement a system which will not cost the state any additional money while simultaneously begin thinking about a more sophisticated system?

Partial list of AB 1624 supporters (there are over 750 in all)
California Common Cause
California Congress of Parents, Teachers & Students, Inc.
California Public Interest Research Group
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Glendale-La Crescenta Advocates
League of Women Voters
Sierra Club
United We Stand, America
University of California
City of Berkeley
City of Los Altos
City of Sonoma
Del Norte County
Glenn County
Santa Cruz County
Government Technology Magazine
Napa Valley Register
Oakland Tribune
Orange County Register
Sacramento Bee
San Mateo Times & Daily News Leader
Santa Cruz Sentinel
Torrance Daily Breeze