The Rise of Bot-Generated Public Records Requests: How States Are Responding

As automated technologies reshape public records administration, states are taking steps to address the growing challenges of computer-generated requests.

Public records laws are built on the principle of government transparency. However, advances in artificial intelligence and automated technology are introducing new challenges for agencies responsible for responding to records requests. Automated systems can generate and submit large volumes of requests, potentially overwhelming records personnel, increasing processing times, and diverting resources from essential agency operations.

Several states have begun addressing this issue through legislation, establishing new procedures and limitations intended to protect agency operations without undermining government transparency.



A Changing Legislative Landscape

Indiana: Effective July 1, 2026, House Enrolled Act 1360 amended Indiana's Access to Public Records Act (Indiana Code 5-14-3). Under IC 5-14-3-8.1, agencies may prioritize requests from Indiana residents and those submitted for civic, journalistic, academic, or personal purposes. The law also permits agencies to delay or deny certain requests originating from automated systems or out-of-state entities when necessary to prevent disruption of core agency functions.

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Illinois: Illinois established a process for addressing potentially automated requests under 5 ILCS 140/3(j). Public bodies that reasonably believe a request was not submitted by a person may require verification. If the requester fails to verify within 30 days, the agency may deny the request. This provision gives agencies a mechanism to address suspected automated submissions while protecting requesters from unnecessary demands for personal information.

Washington: Washington has addressed bot-generated requests under RCW 42.56.080(3). The law permits agencies to deny certain automated requests when multiple submissions from the same requester occur within a 24-hour period and responding would excessively interfere with essential agency functions. Importantly, the provision does not authorize denial simply because artificial intelligence was used to help prepare a request.

California: Senate Bill 1159, enacted in 2026 addresses the legal status of artificial intelligence under the California Public Records Act and other government transparency laws. The legislation clarifies that AI systems and autonomous agents do not independently qualify as persons under these laws, establishing boundaries between automated technology and the legal rights of human requesters.

What This Means for Public Safety Records Professionals



Although these laws differ in scope, they reflect a broader effort to address the operational challenges associated with automated records requests. For public safety records professionals, understanding these distinctions is increasingly important.



Agencies should review their request intake procedures, remain informed of applicable state laws, and ensure that decisions involving automated submissions are supported by appropriate legal authority. Identifying a request as computer-generated does not, by itself, necessarily justify delaying or denying access.

As technology continues to evolve, records professionals will remain at the forefront of balancing efficient records management with public accountability. The challenge is not simply managing the volume of requests, but ensuring that technological advancements do not compromise an agency's ability to fulfill its responsibilities under public records laws.