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CER PRESS RELEASE: March 8, 2018

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Local cost of living down for fifth year

According to the Cost of Living Index published by Council for Community and Economic Research in Arlington, VA, the cost of living in Cochise County remained lower than the national average in 2017—the fifth consecutive year. Back in 2012, costs locally were slightly above those nationally but have been lower ever since. Last year was the fifth straight year of decline in the local cost of living compared to the year prior (and relative to nationwide averages).

The COLI report, released at the end of January, provides comparative data for 269 urban areas across the nation, measuring relative price levels for consumer goods and services. It includes separate weighted sub-indices for grocery items (meats, dairy products, produce, bakery products, and other miscellaneous items), housing (new home prices, mortgage rates, and apartment rentals), utilities (electricity, other home energy, and telephone service), transportation (gasoline and tire balancing), health care (optometrist visits, doctor visits, dentist visits, and prescription and non-prescription medications) and miscellaneous goods and services (a wide range of categories including food away from home, personal care items, apparel, household operations items, reading material, entertainment, and alcoholic beverages).

Cochise County's cost of living in 2017 was 6.3 percent lower than the average of all participating places nationwide. That was down from 2016 when the cost of living locally was 5 percent lower than the national average. The net decrease was due to lower relative prices

locally last year (compared to 2016) for groceries, housing, and utilities. Local costs for transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services increased from 2016 to 2017 relative to national averages.

The cost of living in Cochise County in 2017 was 1.4 percent lower than Phoenix and 0.4 percent lower than Tucson. Health care and miscellaneous goods and services in Cochise County cost less than in both Tucson and Phoenix in 2017. Utilities and transportation were costlier in Cochise County than in Tucson and Phoenix. Housing costs locally were lower than Phoenix but higher than Tucson. Grocery costs locally were higher than Phoenix, but lower than Tucson.

In 2017, all categories of cost except transportation were lower in Cochise County than nationwide. Transportation costs locally were 4.7 higher than the national average in 2017 (up from the same level as nationally in 2016).

Local grocery costs were 1 percent below the national average in 2017 (up from 1.7 percent above the national average in 2016).

The cost of housing in Cochise County was 14.6 percent below the national average in 2017 (down from 8.6 percent below in 2016).

The local cost of utilities was 1.4 percent lower than the national average last year (down from 2 percent higher than nationally in 2016).

Healthcare costs were 4.5 percent below the national average in 2017 (up slightly from 5 percent below in 2016).

The local cost of miscellaneous goods and services was 6.2 percent below the national average last year (up from 8.1 percent below in 2016).

Statewide, there were six places participating in the COLI in 2017. In addition to Cochise County, other participating areas were Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City, Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma. Of those, only Bullhead City had an overall cost of living that was lower than Cochise County. The highest cost of living of participating places in Arizona last year was Lake Havasu City, which was 4.5 percent above the national average.

COLI data for Cochise County are collected by Cochise College Center for Economic Research and submitted to Council for Community and Economic Research for inclusion in the index.

COST OF LIVING COMPARISONS

	<i>Sierra Vista/Douglas MSA*</i>	<i>Tucson</i>	<i>Phoenix</i>	<i>Bullhead City</i>	<i>Lake Havasu City</i>	<i>Yuma</i>
2013	98.0	95.6	96.0	93.4	103.1	104.2
2014	97.3	97.0	96.2	93.8	100.4	101.3
2015	95.3	92.8	95.9	92.4	101.5	99.8
2016	95.0	93.1	97.0	94.1	**	97.8
2017	93.7	94.1	95.0	89.8	104.5	96.4

* The Sierra Vista-Douglas MSA is a statistical area designation for all of Cochise County. ** Data not available.

Note. The average for all participating places nationwide equals 100 and each participant's index is read as a percentage of the average for all places.

Source: Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER), Cost of Living Index

SIERRA VISTA/DOUGLAS MSA COST OF LIVING

	<i>Composite Index</i>	<i>Grocery Items</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Utilities</i>	<i>Transportation</i>	<i>Health Care</i>	<i>Misc. Goods & Services</i>
2013	98.0	91.3	95.4	99.2	101.1	97.4	101.4
2014	97.3	94.7	93.6	102.8	102.6	96.5	98.1
2015	95.3	94.3	93.7	103.8	99.3	94.7	93.2
2016	95.0	101.7	91.4	102.0	100.0	95.0	91.9
2017	93.7	99.0	85.4	98.6	104.7	95.5	93.8

Note. The Sierra Vista-Douglas MSA is a statistical area designation for all of Cochise County. The average for all participating places nationwide equals 100 and each participant's index is read as a percentage of the average for all places.

Source: Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER), Cost of Living Index