

2016 Ballot Guide



The Bell Policy Center identifies, researches and advocates for the ideas that build and sustain economic opportunity in Colorado. Each election cycle, we examine the statewide ballot measures and make recommendations based on the values that drive our work. For our full analysis, visit www.bellpolicy.org.

Amendment 69 — Statewide Healthcare System

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Create</i> a taxpayer-funded universal health care coverage plan in the constitution, called ColoradoCare.	ColoradoCare would save money — \$4.5 billion in health care costs by 2019 — and would create a more equitable, transparent system.	At twice the size of the state budget, ColoradoCare would be expensive, risky and bad for business, and it lacks key details about implementation.
Research says:	The Colorado Health Institute projects that ColoradoCare would nearly break even in its first year while extending coverage to all Coloradans, but it would slide into ever-increasing deficits in future years unless taxes were increased.	
Our position:	OPPOSE. We support improved health outcomes through better coverage and lower costs but question ColoradoCare’s ability to achieve them. This measure exposes the state to potential unintended detrimental consequences because it cements a broad, taxpayer-funded program within the state constitution while leaving crucial implementation complexities to be decided in the future.	

Amendment 70 — Raise the Minimum Wage

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> existing constitutional language to raise the minimum wage from \$8.31 per hour to \$12 in gradual steps by 2020.	Workers cannot live on the less than \$300 per week post-taxes that they make at the current wage, which has not kept up with the rising cost of living. The wage can be raised without negatively affecting jobs or raising prices, and workers would spend it boosting local economies.	Increasing the minimum wage would force employers to lay off or delay hiring low-wage workers, which would hurt businesses, particularly small employers in rural areas where wages are generally lower.
Research says:	Our research showed that Colorado created 71,200 jobs in the two years following the minimum wage increase approved in 2006. Most workers affected are older than 25, are women and work in a wide range of jobs.	
Our position:	SUPPORT. The Bell has helped lead this campaign from day one. Our research clearly shows we can raise the minimum wage as proposed without hurting jobs or the economy. In fact, raising the minimum wage helps local businesses and local economies because low-wage workers are likely to spend their extra dollars in their communities.	

Amendment 71— Constitutional Amendments

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<p><i>Amend</i> existing constitutional language to make it more difficult to amend. Initiated amendments would need to collect signatures from 2% of the registered voters in each of the state’s 35 senate districts. A new constitutional amendment would require 55% of the popular vote. Existing constitutional provisions could be repealed in whole or in part with a 50% majority, but the new 2% signature requirements would still apply.</p>	<p>Colorado’s constitution is too easy to amend and contains a number of amendments brought forward by well-funded special interest groups. Discouraging constitutional amendments and encouraging statutory amendments is good for the state because statutes can be more easily amended to address problems. The signature requirements would ensure that an initiative has support from all over the state.</p>	<p>We amend the constitution to address new and ongoing problems the state faces. The signature requirements in this measure would make an important democratic tool much less accessible to grassroots organizations with limited resources, and the new majority requirement would significantly limit the kinds of measures Colorado can pass by popular initiative.</p>
Research says:	<p>Research by the University of Denver recommends encouraging statutory amendments as a more effective way to minimize constitutional amendments than increasing either the signature or majority vote requirements.</p>	
Our position:	<p>OPPOSE. The Bell shares the concerns held by the proponents that our state constitution is too easily amended and agrees it has resulted in inflexible constraints that undermine key aspects of our representative democracy. However, we cannot ignore the immediacy of our state’s fiscal challenges. This amendment would significantly limit Colorado’s ability to reform TABOR, making it more difficult to enact various revenue-raising approaches. The signature requirements also put an added burden on less-well-funded groups who want to propose a citizen initiative.</p>	

Amendment 72 — Increase Cigarette and Tobacco Taxes

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<p><i>Amend</i> existing constitutional language to increase taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products. Require that the new revenue be spent on medical research, tobacco prevention, veterans’ health services, youth behavioral health services and other health programs.</p>	<p>Raising tobacco taxes would deter people from using these products, which leads to improved health outcomes. Colorado’s most vulnerable populations, including veterans, children and rural residents, would benefit from programs funded with the increased revenue.</p>	<p>This tax increase would disproportionately affect low-income Coloradans and lock spending into the Constitution, regardless of whether those programs would need future funding.</p>
Research says:	<p>The number of cigarettes sold in Colorado declined nearly every year for over a decade after tobacco taxes were raised in 2004 but began to increase in 2015, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.</p>	
Our position:	<p>SUPPORT. This measure helps pay for programs that are currently underfunded but important to families who are working to get ahead and are most affected by the negative health effects of tobacco use.</p>	

Proposition 106 — Access to Medical Aid in Dying Medication

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> Colorado statutes to give mentally competent, terminally ill people with a prognosis of six months or less a right to access lethal Medical Aid-in-Dying (MAID) medication. Establish protections for patients and criminal penalties for those who misuse the process.	In cases of extreme suffering where pain cannot be alleviated, MAID would give patients peace. There are enough protections and safeguards in the measure to prevent abuse of the medication.	There are not sufficient safeguards in place, and MAID might result in the abuse of elderly, disabled or other vulnerable populations.
Research says:	A Colorado Health Institute analysis highlighted research showing that vulnerable populations are no more likely to request MAID than the general population.	
Our position:	NEUTRAL. We support the protection of vulnerable populations. However, we also support the idea that this measure would alleviate much suffering from those same populations.	

Proposition 107 — Presidential Primaries

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> Colorado statutes to establish a presidential primary, replacing the current caucus system for presidential elections, opening the primary to unaffiliated voters and making Colorado a “winner-take-all” primary state.	The caucus system is confusing and inaccessible, especially to those with less flexible working hours and single parents. Changing to a primary would open the election to those populations, as well as to unaffiliated voters.	Taxpayers would be required to fund political parties’ elections even though they are private entities. Unaffiliated voters should not help choose candidates for parties they are not part of. Eliminating the caucuses would remove one of the few ways people can passionately become involved in the political process.
Our position:	SUPPORT. A presidential primary would very likely increase voter turnout. We support increased voter participation, especially increased participation from working families.	

Proposition 108 — Open Primary Elections

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> state statutes to create an open primary for all non-presidential elections. Unaffiliated voters could vote in the primary and would receive a combined ballot with candidates from every party. Their ballots would not count if they chose candidates from multiple parties.	Primary elections are publicly financed and should be open to all taxpayers, including those unaffiliated with a political party — one-third of registered voters. This measure would give all Coloradans a voice.	Creating a combined ballot for unaffiliated voters would lead to greater voter confusion and significantly more ballots being rejected, therefore disenfranchising voters.
Our position:	NEUTRAL. We support the idea of open primaries because it gives unaffiliated voters more of a choice in state and local elections. At the same time, we share concerns that the proposed mechanism for implementation will lead to a large number of invalidated ballots.	

Amendment T — No Exception to Involuntary Servitude Prohibition

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> the state constitution to remove language that currently allows for slavery and involuntary servitude to be used as punishment for the conviction of a crime.	The current constitutional language is outdated. This measure affirms the basic rights of Americans that are already held to be self-evident: that no person should have to perform involuntary servitude, even if they are incarcerated.	Removing the “involuntary servitude” language from the constitution may create legal confusion surrounding inmates working in prisons or community service programs.
Our position:	SUPPORT. The Bell supports the dignity and rights of all individuals, including incarcerated persons.	

Amendment U — Exempt Certain Possessory Interests from Property Taxes

What it would do	Proponents say ...	Opponents say ...
<i>Amend</i> the state constitution to eliminate property taxes for individuals or businesses that use government-owned property for a private benefit that has a market value of \$6,000 or less.	This measure would eliminate the inefficient and burdensome process of collecting a property tax that frequently costs more than it contributes to revenue.	Businesses and individuals who use public land for private profit should not be given a tax break, even if the tax bill is small.
Our position:	SUPPORT. Amendment U may save time and minor costs for county assessors and tax collectors.	

A longer analysis of each ballot measure is available at www.bellpolicy.org.

Your vote on these ballot measures is important. Because Colorado is a ballot initiative state, you vote not only on people to represent you but also directly on public policy. This ballot guide is intended to be a resource as you prepare to vote on public policy and as you discuss the election with friends, family and coworkers.

All registered Colorado voters will receive a ballot in the mail for the 2016 General Election. Ballots will be mailed to voters between Oct. 17 and Oct. 21. For your vote to be counted, you must return your completed ballot, by mail or in person, so that it reaches your county clerk’s office no later than 7 p.m. on Nov. 8 (Election Day). Please carefully read and follow all instructions provided with your ballot.

For more information about the election, including how to register and how to vote in person, go to www.GoVoteColorado.com or call your county clerk’s office. To view the official 2016 state ballot information booklet (the “Blue Book”), go to www.ColoradoBlueBook.com. The Blue Book contains detailed information on all state ballot measures and other election matters. There is also a list of phone numbers and postal addresses for all Colorado county election offices.