



Blueprint for Opportunity

Issues that matter
Ideas that work

A guide for Colorado
candidates and voters
in the 2006 election

The Bell
Policy Center



Research • Advocacy • Opportunity

Dome of Colorado State Capital Building

When this dome was built, steel reinforcement was used in the concrete walls, and the dome was made of concrete. It is the only dome of its kind in the world.

*E. E. Myers Archt.
Dobson, Minn.*

Interior Elevation of one half of dome showing finish, size, and weight per sq. ft. for the several parts.



Blueprint for Opportunity

Colorado is a land of Opportunity for many of us – a place where those who are willing to work hard and play fair can realize the American Dream. Our task is to extend this promise into the 21st Century.

We all know the world is changing. The forces of a global economy create a brand new set of challenges for Colorado families.

Our top priority should be to bring economic security to middle class families in uncertain times and create the conditions that will allow more families to join the middle class.

Our goal is the same as it has been for many generations: To create a prosperous and fair economy – an economy that rewards hard work, not greed; that benefits the many, not the few. And, like generations before us, it is our turn to rise to the occasion.

Colorado families face huge uncertainties – sky-rocketing health care costs, spiking energy costs, increasing debt and foreclosures, the potential loss of pensions and retirement plans, stagnant wages, increased costs for essentials like housing and insurance, and declining savings.

Frankly, many families today feel they are on their own.

But they are not on their own. America has always looked to changing times and found new opportunities for prosperity and greatness, and we will do that again.

Coloradans deserve a state government that will confront these challenges and help keep the American Dream alive for hard-working families.

We cannot and do not want to turn back the clock, and we can't close ourselves off from the rest of the world.

But we *can* make sure our people are ready to compete; we *can* have schools that work for all our kids; we *can* enhance the economic security of families; we *can* ensure access to health care while holding down costs; we *can* create quality jobs that pay well and provide benefits; and we *can* do more to keep housing affordable, improve savings rates and expand retirement options.

And we can have a government that serves our needs, keeps our trust, uses our tax dollars wisely, and is truly accountable to the people it serves.

In short, we can make state government work for all families; a government that makes prosperity and opportunity for all its top priority.

This *Blueprint for Opportunity* outlines proposals we believe are at the core of such an agenda in Colorado. It consists of four sections:

- Preparing our kids to prosper in a global economy
- Helping families get ahead and join the middle class
- Helping middle class families stay ahead
- Making state government work

We make specific proposals in each section. Each proposal addresses a serious barrier Colorado families face every day.

Each proposal is well researched and would be cost-effective, and most can be adopted in the next legislative session.

And, if implemented, each will significantly improve the lives of Colorado's families.

Executive Summary

1. To prepare our kids to prosper in a global economy, Colorado should:

- ✓ Raise the performance of all students and narrow the achievement gap among kids of different races and economic backgrounds.
- ✓ Help more kids stay in school until they are prepared to succeed in college or the workplace.
- ✓ Make college more affordable and accessible to anyone who wants to go to college.

2. To help more Colorado families get ahead and join the middle class, we should:

- ✓ Make sure hard work pays enough to support a family.
- ✓ Make family necessities more accessible and affordable.
- ✓ Give families the tools they need to save and build wealth.

3. To help middle class families stay ahead in Colorado, we should:

- ✓ Restructure the education system for the 21st Century.
- ✓ Ensure Colorado families can afford the health care they need.
- ✓ Renew the promise of secure pensions and retirement plans.
- ✓ Make strategic investments in the jobs and infrastructure that underpin a competitive economy.

4. To make state government work for all of us, we should:

- ✓ Give our elected officials more of the tools they need to do their job.
- ✓ Hold our elected officials and state agencies more accountable.

Blueprint for Opportunity: A call to action

In 2006, Colorado will elect a new governor and new legislators.

In this election, Coloradans have the chance to commit to an opportunity agenda for the future – to extending opportunities for families in a changing world.

- We call on **candidates for office** to read and endorse these measures and commit to implementing them if elected.
- We call on the **media** to scrutinize this report and ask candidates where they stand.
- We call on **those who disagree** with this agenda to explain why they believe their ideas will better meet the needs of Colorado's families.
- We ask **activists** to help spread the word about the importance of an opportunity agenda.
- And we ask **voters** to let opportunity be their guide as they decide who they want to serve them in the future.