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Ballot Simplified: More Jobs, More Roads, Less Taxes

Here's how I'm voting on Colorado's crowded list of ballot issues and judges for 2018.

The issues: Thirteen changes to the state constitution or laws are up for decision by we the people. That's a lot to wade through.

But they boil down to a few common-sense ideas — more jobs, more roads, less taxes, better maps for electing congressmen and legislators and — “when in doubt, vote no.”

Take the big ones first.

Vote no on 112 because it will throw many thousands out of work and tank the economy by shutting down the state's oil and gas industry.

Vote no on 73 and 110 because we're already overtaxed. Smarter spending, not higher taxes, is the answer for our schools and roads.

Vote yes on 109 to build those roads by bonding existing revenue, like a mortgage on your house.

Vote yes on Y and Z to stop the gerrymandering by which politicians pick their voters instead of vice versa.

Now for the smaller ones.

Vote yes on A so it's clear a convict isn't a slave.

Vote yes on 75 so ordinary candidates can take bigger donations when mega-rich candidates spend their own millions.

Vote yes on 111 so consenting adults can borrow and lend for mutual benefit, without the nanny state babying them.

Vote no on 74 so endless lawsuits over land use don't paralyze the give and take between property rights and public need (some agree on this and some don't - the Board of County Commissioners in Douglas County supports "NO" on 74). [The Elbert County Republicans recommend a YES on Amendment 74 to protect private property rights.]

Vote no on X (hemp regulation), W (judge retention), and V (age of eligibility) — all of them needless, unless you want college kids as lawmakers.

So that's my recommendation on all thirteen. Reasonable people can differ on the last nine. Do as you think best.

But on the first four — more jobs, more roads, less taxes — it's an easy call, and a vital one.

Get those wrong and Coloradans will really regret it. Let's get'em right!

To summarize, in the order listed on your ballot:

V = No

W = No

X = No

Y = Yes

Z = Yes

A = Yes

73 = No

74 = YES* **[Elbert County Republicans recommend a YES although Mr. Andrews recommended a No.]**

75 = Yes

109 = Yes

110 = No

111 = No

112 = No

Judges up for retention: I'll cast a solid no-vote on all of them.

Nothing personal, since most do a pretty good job.

But our state's performance evaluation system is toothless, and ultimately we need judicial term limits. By turning thumbs down, we send that message.

Candidate races: Please join me in voting a straight Republican ticket.

The GOP, while obviously imperfect, is America's best bulwark against leftism sweeping away our entire constitutional structure.

Other than the church, the Republican Party is the most important force on earth for human liberty. We need it. It needs us. There is no Plan B.

Amendment V - Lower Age Requirement for Members of the State Legislature

SUBMITTING TO THE REGISTERED ELECTORS OF THE STATE OF COLORADO AN AMENDMENT TO THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION CONCERNING A REDUCTION IN THE AGE QUALIFICATION FOR A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FROM TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO TWENTY-ONE YEARS.

Amendment W - Election Ballot Format for Judicial Retention Elections

SUBMITTING TO THE REGISTERED ELECTORS OF THE STATE OF COLORADO AN AMENDMENT TO THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION CONCERNING A CHANGE IN THE FORMAT OF THE ELECTION BALLOT FOR JUDICIAL RETENTION ELECTIONS.

Amendment X - Industrial Hemp Definition

Amendment X proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to: remove the definition of “industrial hemp” from the Colorado Constitution and, instead, use the definition in federal law or state statute.

Argument For: Striking the definition of industrial hemp from the Colorado Constitution allows the state legislature to react to changes to the definition at the federal level. As a result, Colorado’s industrial hemp growers will maintain compliance with federal policy and remain competitive with other states.

Argument Against: Voters approved Amendment 64 to the Colorado Constitution in 2012, which included the current definition of industrial hemp. Amendment X allows the state legislature to make changes to the term’s definition, which may deviate from voters’ original intent.

Amendment Y - Congressional Redistricting

Creates an [independent commission](#) for congressional districts

Amendment Y would create an independent commission for redistricting congressional districts in Colorado. The commission would be composed of 12 members: four from the state’s largest political party, four from the state’s second largest political party, and four that are not affiliated with any political party.

The amendment would:

- Establish qualifications for members to serve on the commission and the methods used to appoint members;
- Provide opportunities for the public to be involved in the process;
- Mandate that any paid lobbying of the commission must be reported to the secretary of state within 72 hours of when the lobbying took place; and
- Establish methods by which maps should be drawn and require at least eight of the 12 members to approve a map.

Amendment Z - Legislative Redistricting

Creates an [independent commission](#) for state legislative districts

Amendment Z would create an independent state legislative redistricting commission that would be responsible for redistricting Colorado's 65 House districts and 35 Senate districts. The commission would be composed of 12 members: four from the state’s largest political party, four from the state’s second largest political party, and four that are not affiliated with any political party.

Amendment A - Prohibit Slavery and Involuntary Servitude in All Circumstances

Amendment A proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to remove language that currently allows slavery and involuntary servitude to be used as punishment for the conviction of a crime.

Argument For: The section of the Colorado Constitution that allows slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime should be updated because the current language represents a time in the United States when not all people were seen as human beings or treated with dignity. Removing the language reflects fundamental values of freedom and equality, and makes an important symbolic statement.

Argument Against: Slavery and involuntary servitude are already illegal in all instances, and therefore this is an unnecessary change to the Colorado Constitution that will have little to no impact. Further, the passage of Amendment A may result in legal uncertainty around current offender work practices in the state.

Colorado Amendment 73

Establish Income Tax Brackets and Raise Taxes for Education Initiative is on the [ballot](#) in [Colorado](#) as a [combined initiated constitutional amendment and state statute](#).

A **yes** vote supports the ballot initiative to establish a [tax bracket system](#) rather than a flat tax rate and raise taxes for individuals earning more than \$150,000 per year, raise the corporate income tax rate, and create the [Quality Public Education Fund](#).

A **no** vote opposes the ballot initiative to establish a [tax bracket system](#) rather than a flat tax rate and raise taxes for individuals earning more than \$150,000 per year, raise the corporate income tax rate, and create the [Quality Public Education Fund](#).

A [55% supermajority vote](#) is required for the approval of this initiative. **Penn Pfiffner, board chairman of the TABOR Foundation**, said, "Even people who support increased taxes for education should vote against this concept. I have learned that a graduated income tax is the worst possible scheme to raise taxes. No longer would Colorado have a fair provision in which your taxes go up proportionally with higher incomes, but the burden gets greater and greater under this proposal. Corporate income taxes are jacked up too. If successful, proponents should just post a sign that says, 'we don't want success in our state.' Haven't proponents read the fable against killing the goose that laid the golden eggs?"^[6]

Amendment 74 - Just Compensation for Reduction in Fair Market Value by Government Law or Regulation

An amendment to the Colorado constitution requiring the government to award just compensation to owners of private property when a government law or regulation reduces the fair market value of the property.

The ballot title and submission clause as designated and fixed by the Board is as follows:

Shall there be an amendment to the Colorado constitution requiring the government to award just compensation to owners of private property when a government law or regulation reduces the fair market value of the property?

Argument For: Coloradans deserve to be treated fairly when a government decision reduces the value of their property. Because current law is not clear, a government can enact regulations that affect how property is used, reducing the property's value without having to pay for it. For instance, if a government authorizes the construction of a new parking garage, the surrounding home values may be decreased because the garage blocks scenic views and increases noise and traffic congestion. For many Coloradans, property is the most significant asset they own. If a new law or regulation reduces its value, it is only right that the owner be fairly compensated by the state or a local government.

Amendment 75 - Constitutional Campaign Contributions

increase campaign contribution limits when a candidate loans or contributes at least \$1.0 million to his or her own campaign, by allowing all candidates in the same election to collect five times the level of individual contributions currently authorized in the state constitution.

Argument For: Wealthy candidates have an unfair advantage in elections because current campaign finance laws allow them to contribute vast sums of their personal resources to their own campaigns. Colorado's current limits on individual contributions are among the lowest in the country, and candidates who rely on individual contributions are at a significant disadvantage in communicating their message to voters. Amendment 75 offers an effective way to encourage competitive elections.

Proposition 109 – Authorize Bonds for Transportation Funding

Proposition 110 – Transportation Funding

Proposition 111 – Pay-Day Loans

Proposition 111 proposes amending the Colorado statutes to reduce the total cost for a payday loan to a 36 percent annual percentage rate; expand what constitutes unfair or deceptive trade practices for payday lending.

Proposition 112 – Setback Requirement for Oil and Gas Development

Proposition 112 is so extreme that even Jared Polis is opposed to it. Prop 112 would eliminate over 90% of the available land for future oil and gas development. It is a huge violation of protecting private property.

Proposition 112 requires that any new oil and natural gas development be located at least 2,500 feet from occupied structures and other areas designated as vulnerable. This type of requirement is commonly known as a setback.

A **yes** vote supports the initiative to mandate that new oil and gas development projects, including fracking, be a minimum distance of 2,500 feet from occupied buildings and other areas designated as vulnerable.

A **no** vote opposes the initiative to mandate that new oil and gas development be a minimum distance of 2,500 feet from occupied buildings and other areas.

Measure design

This initiative was designed to mandate that new oil and gas development, including fracking, be a minimum distance of 2,500 feet from occupied buildings such as homes, schools, hospitals, and other areas designated as *vulnerable*.

Vulnerable areas are defined by the initiative as "playgrounds, permanent sports fields, amphitheaters, public parks, public open space, public and community drinking water sources, irrigation canals, reservoirs, lakes, rivers, perennial or intermittent streams, and creeks, and any additional vulnerable areas designated by the state or a local government."^[2]

Protect Colorado is leading the campaign in opposition to the measure. Protect Colorado argued that the measure would "devastate our economy, wipe out thousands of jobs, and endanger our environment. [It] would threaten private property rights and could even cost Colorado residents hundreds of millions of dollars in lawsuits."^[6] Karen Crummy, a spokeswoman of Protect Colorado, said, "This initiative is economically devastating to the state of Colorado. Not only would it cost thousands of jobs, but it would cost billions in actual economic impact."^[3]

JUDGES: No on all. A majority of the judges were appointed by Democrat Governors Lamm, Ritter, and Hickenlooper.