

## Overview of Colorado ballot questions for 2020

### CAPITOL REVIEW

By Mark Hillman

In this year's election, Colorado voters will decide on 11 ballot questions that will amend either the state constitution or statutes. Following is my attempt to condense sometimes complex issues into a simple statement that explains my thoughts on each question.

**Amendment B – Repeal Gallagher Amendment** (amends constitution) is a complicated question because the 1982 Gallagher amendment created a formula that compares residential property tax rates to all other (commercial, agricultural, etc.) property tax rates. Currently, the tax rate for a home goes down as the actual value goes up, usually resulting in nothing more than a modest increase every two years. For homes with a value that is steady or declining, the tax bill actually goes down. If passed, Amendment B will result in residential property taxes increasing or decreasing in tandem with the actual value of your property.

The Legislature placed this question on the ballot because it estimates that next year the Gallagher amendment will cut residential tax rates from 7.15% to 5.88%, which would reduce funding to schools by about \$490 million and local governments by \$200 million. Legislators also voted to freeze the residential tax rate if Amendment B passes, so it cannot be raised without a public vote.

If funding for schools and local governments are important, then you should vote YES. If property taxes on your home are a bigger concern, then you should vote NO.

**Amendment C – Charitable Gaming** (constitution) would allow non-profits to apply for a bingo license in their third year of operation rather than the current five-year requirement. I'll vote YES.

**Amendment D – Citizenship of Qualified Voters** (constitution) would prohibit the Legislature from allowing non-citizens or anyone under 18 years of age to vote. I'll vote YES.

**Amendment E – Local Voter Approval of Casino Bet Limits** (constitution and statute). When limited-stakes gaming was approved by voters, betting limits could be changed only a statewide vote. Amendment E would allow those betting limits to be changed by a vote of only residents of the casino towns (Black Hawk, Central City, Cripple Creek). I'll be voting NO because this is like putting the fox in charge of the hen house.

**Proposition EE – Taxes on Nicotine Products** (statute) would triple the state tax on cigarettes, raise the tax on other tobacco products by more than half, and create a tax on vaping products equal to the tobacco products tax. I'm not opposed to a tax on vaping products, but I'll be voting NO because tripling the cigarette tax is ridiculous.

**Proposition 113 – Adopt National Popular Vote** (statute) is an opportunity to reverse a really bad idea passed by the Legislature over a year ago. If passed, Prop 113 would award all of Colorado's nine electoral votes (which determines who becomes president) to whomever is determined to have received the most popular votes. That means a candidate that loses in Colorado could receive all of our electoral votes. Worse still, there is no law that stipulates how the "national popular vote" is counted. Close elections could drag on for months. I'll vote NO.

**Proposition 114 – Reintroduction of Gray Wolves** (statute) is a terrible idea to convince voters who have no experience with wolves or responsibility for sheep, calves or other animals on which wolves prey to vote for something they do not understand. Imposing this on farmers and ranchers will only increase animosity between rural and urban Coloradans. I'll vote NO.

**Proposition 115 – Prohibit Abortions after 22 Weeks** (statute) does exactly what it says. An exception is provided when immediately required to save the life of a pregnant woman. Because an unborn child at 22 weeks of pregnancy is able to survive and thrive with proper medical care, I believe this is humane and reasonable. I'll vote YES.

**Proposition 116 – State Income Tax Reduction** (statute) would reduce the state income tax rate from 4.63% to 4.55%. While it may reduce state tax revenues by 1.8% in the first year, it will enhance economic growth which will generate new jobs and tax revenue. I will be voting YES on this modest and timely reduction.

**Proposition 117 – Voter Approval for State Enterprises** (statute). "Enterprise" is the legal fiction that legislators use when they want to impose a new tax but don't want to ask for voters' permission. Since 1993, voters have approved only three new tax increases, but legislators have created 15 new enterprises to collect "fees." Prop 117 would require voter approval of any "fee" that will collect over \$100 million in its first five years. I'll vote YES.

**Proposition 118 – Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance** (statute) illustrates the principle that "there's no free lunch." Prop 118 creates a mandatory insurance program to provide paid leave for employees of all businesses. Both employees and employers will pay premiums to fund.

Employees would be eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave for occurrences including personal illness or injury, bonding with a newborn, caring for a family member, when a family member is on active military duty, or is a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. After taking leave, an employee is entitled to return to the same job with equal seniority and benefits as before. An employee earning \$1,000 a week will pay \$234 in premiums each year, and the employer will match that amount. When fully implemented, the program is expected to collect \$1.34 billion a year in premiums.

This proposal has no guardrails to address insufficient funding or over-use which could cause insolvency and further strain a state budget that struggles to pay for essentials like education and transportation.

Coloradans cannot afford this expensive new entitlement, so I'll vote NO.

NOTE: Constitutional amendments cannot be changed by the Legislature, only by a vote of the people, so if they don't work as advertised, it's really tough to make corrections. Statutes can be amended by the Legislature.

*Mark Hillman served as Senate Majority Leader and State Treasurer. To read more or comment, go to [www.MarkHillman.com](http://www.MarkHillman.com).*

Ballot Information Booklet by Colorado Legislative Council  
[https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/blue\\_book\\_english\\_for\\_web\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/blue_book_english_for_web_2020_0.pdf)

Common Sense Institute Ballot Guide; <https://commonsenseinstitute.org/ballot-issues/>

Colorado Rising Action; <https://coloradorisingstateaction.org/2020-ballot/>

Centennial Institute Ballot Guide; [http://cdn-centennial.pressidium.com/centennial/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CI-Voter-Guide\\_2020.pdf](http://cdn-centennial.pressidium.com/centennial/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CI-Voter-Guide_2020.pdf)

Colorado Family Action – Interactive Voter Guide; <http://coloradovotersguide.org/>