

## **CoPIRG's November 2018 Ballot Guide**

The November 2018 ballot in Colorado has thirteen statewide questions. Depending on where in Colorado you live there are also a number of local questions on the ballot. CoPIRG has taken stances on nine measures. You can find our positions and recommendations below.

### **Transportation**

#### **Proposition 110 – Funds Transportation Including Transit, Walking, and Biking with Sales Tax. VOTE YES.**

**What does it do?** – Raises the sales tax 0.62% (the equivalent of 6 cents more in sales tax for every \$10 spent) and funds our transportation system – 45% to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for mostly road projects, 40% to local cities and counties for any kind of transportation they decide, and 15% to a multimodal fund for transit, walking and biking – (these dollars would require a local match guaranteeing even more transit, walking, and biking investments).

**What does that mean?** – Colorado would generate about \$400-\$750 million of new money per year for the next 20 years (the tax expires after 20 years). The CDOT share would go to highway projects across the state including widening parts of I-25. Local governments will have complete flexibility and could fund new or improved transit service, sidewalks, safer intersections, bike and multi-use paths, or pave local roads. The multimodal funds would build out bus service in and around Denver such as the Flatiron Flyer, could double the Bustang bus service that connects the state, and would give every region of Colorado additional money for transit, walking, and biking infrastructure and services.

**Why do we support?** – We are in a new century with new transportation challenges and needs. We cannot tackle climate change, reduce pollution, cut costs, and make our roads safer if we do not significantly increase our investments in transit, walking, and biking. Proposition 110 would increase these investments nearly tenfold. It would fund the kind of transportation options and infrastructure that can help ensure our communities are walkable and bikeable for our families. It would also expand and improve transit options, helping everyone get to where we need to go, when we need to, whether we walk, bike, ride, roll, or drive.

#### **Proposition 109 – Funds Highways Projects Only. VOTE NO**

**What does it do?** – Requires that the legislature spend approximately \$260 million a year on a set of 66 highway projects around Colorado.

**What does that mean?** – The vast majority of the highway projects would widen highways, not fix or maintain the roads we have already invested in that are showing their age. The Legislature would need to find this money every year in the current state budget, which likely would result in cuts to something else.

**Why do we oppose?** – A highway-only approach to transportation leads to a congested, dirty, and dangerous system that negatively impacts our quality of life. Widening a highway does not reduce congestion, which we saw when I-25 in Denver filled up within a few years of adding new lanes in the

2000s. Adding lanes also encourages more driving and cars, which increases pollution and fuels climate change.

## Public Health

### **Amendment 74 – Forces Taxpayers to Pay Polluters Not to Pollute. VOTE NO.**

**What does it do?** – Requires taxpayers to pay a person or company if a law or regulation negatively impacts the value of their property.

**What does that mean?** – If we passed a law that banned a business from dumping pollution into our air or water, that business could claim that their property value will be reduced because they can't pollute anymore. Therefore, taxpayers would have to pay them not to pollute. This Amendment is broad and therefore could result in taxpayer compensation for laws or regulations dealing with zoning, development, or building designs.

**Why do we oppose?** - We shouldn't have to pay polluters not to pollute. They need to just stop. We need to eliminate and remove harmful chemicals and pollutants from our air, water, food, and products as quickly as possible – and we should not have to pay the polluters when we take action to protect the health of ourselves and our community.

### **Proposition 112 – Expands the Distance between Fracking Wells and the Public. VOTE YES.**

**What does it do?** – Requires any new oil and gas drilling wells and equipment be 2,500 feet or more away from specific places including schools, homes, hospitals, parks, and waterways.

**What does that mean?** – 54% of the total land in Colorado and 85% of the non-federal land would be off limits to new oil and gas drilling wells.

**Why do we support?** – Drilling for oil and gas and burning it to power our cars and homes creates pollution that threatens our health and fuels climate change. Oil and gas extraction also contaminates our water and land when it spills. Technological advances mean we no longer have to choose between powering our lives and protecting our health. We should transition away from fossil fuels and Proposition 112 moves us down that path by eliminating new oil and gas drilling in the areas closest to people, our parks, and our waterways.

## Fair Lending Practices

### **Proposition 111 – Stops Predatory Payday Lending. VOTE YES.**

**What does it do?** – Caps the fees and interest on payday loans at 36%.

**What does that mean?** – Currently, payday loans can charge interest and fees that add up to 214%. The average payday loan is \$392 and the average fees and interest on that loan is \$119. The state has a 36% usury cap for every other financial product in Colorado. Payday loans were the exception so this closes that loophole.

**Why do we support?** – The fees and interest that banks and lenders charge should be fair. 36% is already a high cap and anything above that is a rip-off. No industry should be able to exploit customers' cash flow issues with outrageous interest rates and fees. Payday borrowers give the payday loan company access to their checking account to get the loan so the company can take out the fees and interest even if the borrower is still struggling financially. Payday loans are outrageous and a total rip-off.

## Democracy for the People

### **Amendments Y and Z – Removes Gerrymandering from Redistricting. VOTE YES ON BOTH.**

**What does it do?** – Reduces the ability of political parties to create gerrymandered districts by establishing a more impartial commission to draw the Congressional (Amendment Y) and state legislative (Amendment Z) districts in Colorado.

**What does that mean?** – These Amendments reduce the Legislature's and governor's ability to draw their own districts by creating a new redistricting commission, which would include 4 Democrats, 4 Republicans, and 4 Unaffiliated members. Anyone can apply to be on the commission. Half of the members would be selected from the applicant pool in a random drawing and the remaining members would be chosen from the remaining applicant pool by a panel of retired judges. Non-partisan legislative staff would work with the commission to draw the maps. All hearings would be public and the commission would host open meetings in different parts of the state. The districts would need to be the same size, meet the Voting Rights Act of 1965, be compact, and keep communities together.

**Why do we support?** – Voting districts should be drawn in a non-partisan way and reduce gerrymandering, which can result in packing a minority of districts with one party's voters so that the other party can win more seats across the state. These Amendments create an impartial commission and better rules to keep gerrymandering out of redistricting.

### **Amendment 75 – Weakens Contribution Limits for Millionaire Candidates. VOTE NO.**

**What does it do?** – Allows all candidates in a particular race to accept contributions five times higher than the current contribution limit if any candidate in the race gives or loans himself or herself a million dollars of his/her own money.

**What does that mean?** – If a candidate for governor uses \$1 million of their own money in the race or helps a 3<sup>rd</sup> party raise \$1 million for the race, then everyone, including that candidate, can exceed the \$575 contribution limits and accept contributions up to \$2,875 from big donors.

**Why do we oppose?** - We fought hard to ensure contribution limits were in place because we believe that the size of your wallet should not determine the value of your vote. Increasing the contribution limits allows a handful of wealthy contributors to contribute more money, increasing their influence over our elections. In addition, candidates who use \$1 million of their own money will also see the contribution limits for their donors go up. Therefore, there is an incentive for a candidate to spend \$1

million because they can then get even larger checks from the rich donors that they know, further weakening the power of average voters.

## **Denver Initiative 2E - Creates a Small Donor Empowerment Program for Denver Municipal Elections. VOTE YES (ONLY FOR DENVER VOTERS)**

**What does it do?** – Creates a new program that candidates for Denver City Council, clerk and recorder, auditor, and mayor can use where any contribution of \$50 or less receive a 9:1 match from the city’s general funds. It also reduces contribution limits and bans corporations from giving money directly to candidates.

**What does that mean?** – Candidates who are neither independently wealthy nor know wealthy donors have a way to run for office and raise money by focusing on small donors and average voters. Lowering contribution limits and banning direct gifts from corporations to candidates also reduces the influence of the largest donors and corporations.

**Why do we support?** - Our democracy is based on the principle of one person, one vote, which is undermined when candidates have to rely on a handful of large donors to be competitive. Denver Initiative 2E creates a way for candidates to successfully raise the money they need to run for mayor and City Council without being beholden to a small group of large donors. It incentivizes candidates to run a grassroots-fueled campaign and helps move our elections back towards the principle of one person, one vote.

## **INFORMATION AND REMINDERS ON VOTING**

Your ballot may have arrived in the mail as early as October 16<sup>th</sup>. If you have not yet received it and want to check the status, contact the Colorado Secretary of State’s office at [www.govotecolorado.com](http://www.govotecolorado.com). To have your vote counted, your ballot must be **received** by your county election office by November 6<sup>th</sup>. That means you must either mail your ballot back with two stamps no later than October 30<sup>th</sup> OR physically return your ballot to a local drop-off center before 7:00pm MST on November 6<sup>th</sup>. For more information and to find drop-off centers in your area go to <http://www.justvotecolorado.org/>

This year, Colorado voters will be asked to vote on 13 statewide initiatives and referendums. In addition, some communities have local ballot questions.

The Colorado Secretary of State produces a voter guide with a description of each initiative, the actual statute or constitutional changes, and arguments in favor and against. This is often times referred to as the “Blue Book,” which you should have received in the mail. You can find it online at <https://leg.colorado.gov/content/initiatives/initiatives-blue-book-overview/ballot-information-booklet-blue-book>