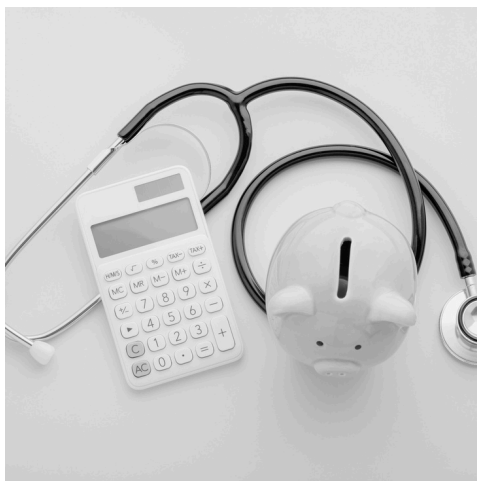




2024

BALLOT GUIDE

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Welcome to the Common Sense Institute

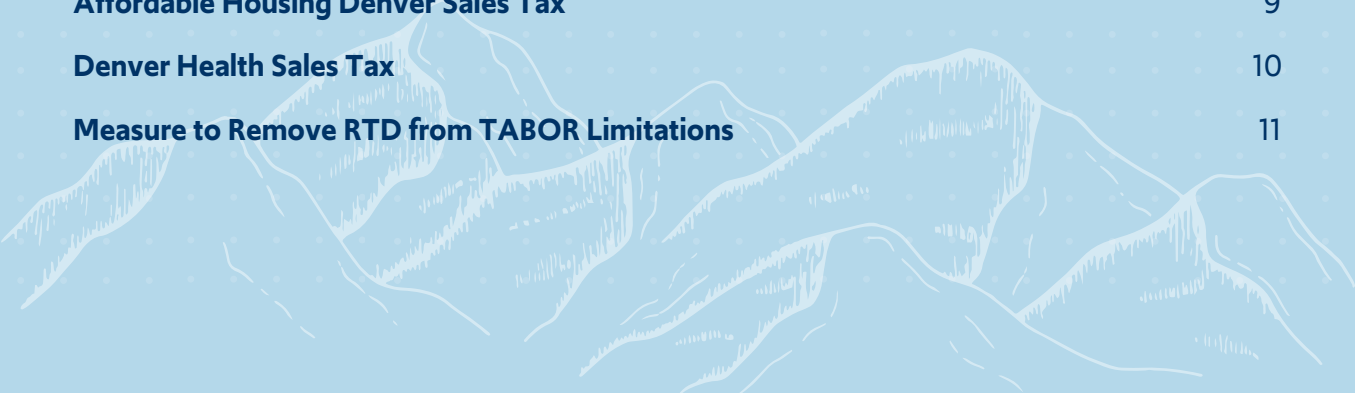
2024 Colorado Ballot Guide!



The Common Sense Institute's 2024 Ballot Guide highlights the potential economic and fiscal impacts of key ballot measures in Colorado. **Proposition 127**, for instance, could lead to significant revenue losses for Colorado Parks and Wildlife and reduce overall economic output by \$61.65 million. Other measures, such as **school choice and law enforcement funding**, focus on improving education options and public safety, while initiatives like the fur ban and affordable housing tax could have broad implications for local businesses and residents.

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Proposition 127

Big Cat Hunting Ban

Summary

This measure would ban the intentional killing, wounding, pursuing, or entrapping of mountain lions, bobcats, and lynx.

Key Facts

- The fiscal impact in the state ballot analysis concludes that Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) revenue would **decline by \$410,000** resulting from direct loss of hunting licenses. CSI found the dynamic impact ranges from \$3.6 million to \$5.8 million—9 to 14 times larger—when accounting for lost elk and mule deer permit revenue affected by an increase in mountain lion population.
- The decline in mountain lion, bobcat, deer, and elk hunting would amount to an 8% reduction in total industry economic activity, **\$61.65 million in lost economic output**.
- **Current state costs related to compensating Coloradans for mountain lion attacks on livestock and other property damage would shift to landowners** as the measure removes mountain lions from definition of big game.



Proposition 127 would reduce CPW's revenue from big cat license sales and result in economic losses. A one-year increase in the mountain lion population could cut CPW revenue by \$3.6 to \$5.8 million, plus a \$410,000 loss in big cat license revenue. Overall, Proposition 127 could decrease economic output by \$61.65 million in 2024, with \$6.28 million from lost mountain lion hunting and \$55.37 million from its indirect impact on elk and deer hunting.

Amendment 80

School Choice in K-12 Education

Summary

Amendment 80 would enshrine school choice in the state constitution, ensuring students access to options such as charter schools.

Key Facts

- **Charter schools are an example of a school choice option that serve a growing number of students.**
- **The academic performance of charter school students**—as measured by the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), the state’s official K-12 assessment—**were higher than those of non-charter school students at every grade level** on both English Language Arts and Math assessments in grades 3 through 8.
- **Charter school students obtained a postsecondary credential at a rate of 41.8%** compared to 32.8% non-charter students for the 2016 graduating class.
- Charters have significantly lower chronic absenteeism rates than district-run schools – **33% to 26.4% respectively in 2023.**
- **Students of color have represented a larger share of charter enrollment since 2015-16.** Students of color comprise half of all charter school students. Over the past decade, the enrollment of students of color in charters has outpaced that growth in district-run schools.



While this measure does not result in immediate change to enrollment policies, it could be a lever for families seeking additional options. There is evidence that students in charter schools have better academic and postsecondary outcomes than students in traditional schools.

Proposition 130

Funding for Law Enforcement

Summary

Proposition 130 appropriates a one-time \$350,000,000 appropriation from the state general fund to pay for a newly created “Peace Officer Training and Support Fund” within the Department of Public Safety for the purposes of recruiting, training, and supporting police officers and their families.

Key Facts

- **Colorado’s number of police officers per 1,000 people has consistently lagged behind the national average.**
- The share of Colorado law enforcement employees who are police officers **shrank from 69% in 2013 to 65% in 2023.**
- From 2011 to 2024, the number of police officers with the power to arrest **increased 7.9%**, just half the rate by which the population rose.
- From 2010 to 2022, **the crime rate in Denver rose 32%**. At the same time, the number of uniformed police officers in the Denver Police Department declined by 15.1%.
- In Colorado Springs, **the crime rate decreased by 15.9%** from 2010 to 2022 while the number of police officers in the Colorado Springs Police Department rose by 5.7%.



Colorado’s crime has risen. A combination of legislative action and public attention reduced the number of uniformed police officers, with funding shifting to alternative policing methods. While the police force has regained some ground, it hasn't kept pace with crime rates or population growth. Evidence from Colorado Springs suggests that investing in hiring and retaining officers can reduce crime.

Arapahoe County Referred Measure

Remove County Revenue and Spending Limit

Summary

In a 4-1 vote, Arapahoe County commissioners referred a measure to voters asking for a permanent increase to county revenue, in a maneuver known as “De-Brucing.” This would remove the county from the revenue and spending limits under TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights), allowing the county to collect an additional \$74 million annually.

Key Facts

- **In 2024, property tax revenue to Arapahoe County government grew to \$177.8 million, a 7% increase from 2023 and a 26% increase from 2019.** County population has increased 1.1% since 2019, while inflation has increased 25%.
- **The average Arapahoe County homeowner saw their property tax bill increase nearly 17% in 2024 or \$444.** The county’s revenue grew below this rate given the slower growth rate of commercial property tax revenue and because it is still subject to a TABOR spending limit, unlike many of the other taxing authorities within the county.
- **The \$74 million property tax increase, resulting from a mill levy increase of 4.615, would represent a 14% increase in total county revenue** (\$532.8 million in 2023) and is double the amount of projected cuts to services the county indicates it will have to make if the measure does not pass. It is not clear how much of the services being cut were funded by temporary federal dollars that came to the county post COVID.



BOTTOM LINE

County expenses have outpaced the recent growth in local and federal revenue, and deferred maintenance costs have increased to \$316 million. Voters will decide if allowing the county to permanently retain additional revenue for “better road quality and traffic improvements, sensible housing solutions and reliable and efficient public safety services” are justified.

Jefferson County Referred Measure 1A

Remove County Revenue and Spending Limit

Summary

Jefferson County commissioners unanimously are asking voters, for a third time in five years, for a permanent increase in county revenue in a maneuver known as “De-Brucing.” This would remove the county from the revenue and spending limits under TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights).

Key Facts

- **The 2024 Jefferson County TABOR refund is estimated to be \$30.5 million.** If voters approve the ballot measure, the elimination of the 2024 refund would increase county revenue by 4% (\$781 million in 2024).
- **Commissioners have stated there would need to be \$20 million in budget cuts next year if the measure does not pass.** However, it is not clear how much of the services being cut were funded by temporary federal dollars that came to the county post COVID as the budget forecast includes continued revenue growth.
- **Jefferson County property tax revenue grew to \$298 million this year, a 7.5% increase over the year before and a 20% increase from 2021 (\$247 million).** County population has decreased by .7% since 2021 while inflation has increased 18%. In other words, the cost of county services has increased while the population has decreased.
- **The average Jefferson County homeowner saw their property tax bill increase 17% in 2024 or by \$497.** The county’s revenue grew below this rate given the slower growth rate of non-residential property tax revenue and because it is still subject to a TABOR spending limit, unlike many of the other taxing authorities within the county.



BOTTOM LINE

Voters have defeated two recent requests by Jefferson County for permanent TABOR exemption. Despite a decline in total population and in student population, property tax revenue and other revenues have continued to grow. Voters will decide if allowing the county to permanently retain additional revenue for “Transportation and infrastructure (building, maintaining, and repairing roads, bridges, potholes, and other county infrastructure); and Public safety (wildfire and flood mitigation and response, addiction and mental health programs, crime prevention programs and strategies, and other county public safety functions)” are justified.

Prohibition on Slaughterhouses

Summary

The initiative would prohibit the construction or use of slaughterhouses within Denver beginning in 2026. If passed, the prohibition would be the first of its kind in the U.S.

Key Facts

- Even if 80% of the lost slaughterhouse economic activity in Denver is retained elsewhere within Colorado, total economic output in the metro Denver area will **decline by an estimated \$760 million in 2026**.
- If the measure passes, job losses in Metro Denver would range from 1,930 to 2,160 in 2026. **Over 65% of job losses** would be outside of the food processing industry.
- Colorado is the nation's leading lamb and sheep processor. In 2023 and 2022 Colorado accounted for roughly **19% of the national lamb and sheep production**.
- Net emissions from the measure are **unlikely to decrease and may even increase from their current level** due to demolition of the existing slaughterhouse and construction of new facilities, and longer shipping/trucking routes for goods.



Colorado is home to the largest lamb and sheep processing industry in the nation, supplying goods around the country. Denver's slaughterhouse plays a key role in supporting the state's agricultural sector and the economy at large. **If the proposed measure were to pass, the metro Denver and Colorado economy would be impacted.** The measure would also likely impact potential future investments in the state's agricultural industry.

Fur Ban

Summary

This ballot measure would restrict fur products in Denver. The measure states it will “prohibit the manufacture, distribution, display, sale, or trade of certain animal fur products in the City of Denver” starting in July of 2025.

Key Facts

- **Purchasing of any fur product including coats, jackets, handbags, wallets, shoes, scarves, gloves, and home accessories with a Denver address would be banned under this measure.**
- **Fly fishing relies heavily on the sale of flies made with fur or feathers, which would be affected by the proposed ballot measure.** The fishing industry generates over \$2.4 billion in economic output across Colorado and supports more than 17,000 jobs each year.
- The National Western Stock Show, held annually in Denver attracted over 700,000 attendees and created \$170 million in economic output in 2023. **Many vendors sell fur items such as cowboy hats and fur-lined boots, which would no longer be permitted should the initiative pass.**



The full impact of this measure will be shouldered by a wide range of retailers and industries including the fly fishing industry and vendors at the National Western StockShow. The proponents have indicated their intention to pursue similar policy in other jurisdictions. If passed, the measure could be a challenge for local businesses and raise prices statewide, affecting the economy.

Affordable Housing Denver Sales Tax

Summary

The Denver City Council and mayor's administration are proposing a citywide 0.5% sales and use tax. The estimated \$100 million would be slated for subsidized housing.

Key Facts

- **The tax would raise \$100 million per year for city-funded affordable housing programs starting in 2025.** In 2024, the City of Denver is budgeted to spend over \$75 million on affordable housing.
- **The city will only be able to build half the units it projects with the new tax revenues** if it follows its previous spending patterns. Proponents say the tax will yield 45,000 units yet half that amount would be expected to be built.



BOTTOM LINE

If this proposal passes, the taxes on goods and services in Denver will rise. The costs of living and shopping in Denver will increase, and the level of overall economic prosperity in the city will decrease.

Denver Health Sales Tax

Summary

Denver Health, is proposing a citywide 0.34% sales and use tax. The tax's estimated \$70 million in revenue would offset rising costs of uncompensated care .

Key Facts

- **Denver Health's uncompensated care costs have doubled since 2017** while the city's support has remained unchanged at \$30.7 million.



BOTTOM LINE

The measure seeks to address problems that some in Denver feel strongly due to the rapidly growing demand for Denver Health Services. While the city's sales tax would increase it would generate \$65-\$70 million for uncompensated care costs that are projected to continue rising.

Measure to Remove RTD from TABOR Limitations

Summary

This measure would remove RTD revenues from the limits set by the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. RTD has exemptions from TABOR currently, but they are set to expire later this year.

Key Facts

- RTD's budget has been climbing as its ridership has fallen. **Between 2019 and 2022, ridership fell 46% while its operating budget increased 3%.**
- In 2014, the system's operating budget was \$477 million. That rose 35% by 2019 to \$644 million, then sank to \$570 million by 2021 largely in response to COVID-19 interruptions. RTD's budget has grown rapidly since then. **By 2023, it had grown to \$856 million, and RTD has proposed a \$1 billion budget for 2024.**
- **RTD would need to nearly triple its ridership in order to recover 30% of its operating costs through rider fares,** which it was officially required to do until 2021.



RTD's proposal would remove RTD's revenues from TABOR limitations. This would occur during a period of time when RTD's budget has increased and ridership has fallen.



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"Common Sense Institute (CSI) is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is excited to share this resource to help inform voters on hugely complex statewide and municipal measures. CSI strives to be a go-to resource where voters can get the facts and make informed decisions."

Kelly Taufel

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR