



BOULDER CHAMBER EYE ON THE BALLOT 2016

The Boulder Chamber announces its positions on the 2016 ballot measures. In summarizing the Chamber’s stances on the numerous ballot issues, President and CEO John Tayer stated, “This year’s crop of ballot initiatives presents many difficult business and philosophical issues. With a Boulder Chamber membership that reflects the diversity of opinions across our community, though, it’s no surprise that our positions on these issues reflect the best interests of our membership and the long-term vitality of the Boulder economy in balance with our community’s social and environmental values.”

For more information and additional perspective on all of the Boulder Chamber’s ballot issue positions, please contact Director of Public Affairs, Andrea Meneghel. *All Boulder Chamber ballot issue positions are based on review and recommendations by the Chamber’s Community Affairs Council with further review and final adoption by the Boulder Chamber Board of Directors.*

AMENDMENT 69 COLORADOCARE, CREATION OF STATEWIDE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
Proposes to create a new government-run, tax payer-funded healthcare system that would cover all Coloradans with health care	Better healthcare for more people at less cost; Access to the same quality healthcare for every resident; Increases coverage and provider choices for all residents – not confined to a narrow network.	Risky, uncertain, unaffordable; Will imbed this uncertainty in the State Constitution; Creates unnecessary new state bureaucracy; Disproportionally affects the self employed;
The Boulder Chamber’s Position: OPPOSE		
<p>The Boulder Chamber shares the goal of making affordable, comprehensive, high-quality healthcare available for all Coloradans. However, we can not support such a complex plan that is so poorly-defined, yet has such a significant impact on existing businesses and employees, especially entrepreneurs and small businesses. Other specific concerns with Amendment 69 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated to cost employers and employees \$25 billion annually. Employers will pay 6.67% of payroll and employees will pay 3.33% of their income with entrepreneurs absorbing a total payroll cost of 10%. • We are concerned about the projected administrative costs to State government and would look for more certainty in the financial structure of a proposed system. • There is too much economic risk and uncertainty in the effects it would have upon, not only the State economy, but also the healthcare industry, with respect to retaining our current healthcare providers that deliver services on which millions of Coloradans depend. • It discourages ground-breaking innovative healthcare research in Colorado as well as investments in new healthcare research facilities. • While implementation of the Affordable Care Act has not been without challenges, there is evidence that it is having a beneficial impact on health care coverage, with the uninsured rate having dropped in 2015 to 6% of all Coloradans. 		



AMENDMENT 70 COLORADO MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>Amend Constitutional language to increase the minimum wage from \$8.31 to \$9.30/hour in 2017. Annual increases of \$0.90 per year after 2017 until it reaches \$12/hour in 2020. After 2020, annual minimum wage adjustments calibrated with the cost of living index.</p>	<p>Current minimum wage has not kept up with costs of living in Colorado or in Boulder County. The 2006 increase did not directly impact the number of jobs in Colorado at any level. Raising the minimum wage will help our workforce earn a living and spur economic growth in our communities.</p>	<p>Takes the choice away from the private sector. Increases business costs. Will reduce jobs and cut hours. Only 3% of Coloradans earn minimum wage, so an increase wouldn't benefit many and over 60% of those are 16-24 years old and just entering the workforce.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber's Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>This was a very challenging issue for the Boulder Chamber with strong opinions and concerns on both sides of the issue.</p> <p>While we acknowledge there is a direct impact to businesses and our economy, we feel it is necessary to address the growing gap of income inequality and the challenge of keeping hard-working individuals out of poverty. Federal Reserve President Janet Yellen has declared that income inequality is one of the greatest threats to our long-term economic security. The minimum wage is just one mechanism for addressing these issues and is important for providing security and predictability to low-wage earners.</p> <p>In supporting the minimum wage increase, we seek to help lift our lowest wage workers out of poverty. We believe our strong economy, particularly in Boulder, can support these increases. While we recognize that a minimum wage increase will place additional burden on small businesses, we have heard from many small business owners and state-wide organizations representing small businesses that increasing wages has helped businesses retain quality employees, reduce turnover, and increase employee performance. Additionally, from a broader economic perspective, those at low wages tend to spend their earned income locally, which is a direct benefit to our local businesses.</p>		



AMENDMENT 71 – AMENDING THE STATE CONSTITUTION – INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM REFORM

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>This measure would change the State Constitution to require initiated amendments to collect signatures from 2% of the registered voters in each of the State’s 35 Senate Districts. In order to pass, a State Constitutional Amendment would need to earn 55% of the popular vote. Repealing current constitutional provisions would also require the 2% signatures of registered voters, but only require passage of simple majority vote by which it went in.</p>	<p>Colorado’s Constitution is currently one of the most easily changed in the country. As a result, it has been amended more than 150 times, with conflicting measures approved. Amendment 71 would require more representative support state-wide in the petition gathering process and amendments. Discouraging constitutional amendments and encouraging statutory amendments is good for the State because statutes can be more easily amended to address problems.</p>	<p>The proposed requirements within the amendment would limit access to the ballot for Constitutional amendments, particularly those initiated by grassroots citizen efforts. It will take well-funded efforts to be able to bring measures forward by engaging in state-wide campaigns.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>It is our commitment to good governance that drives us to support Amendment 71. Our State Constitution should address only our most vital governing principles. Furthermore, Colorado has served as a “special interest” playground where out-of-state groups have funded campaigns to pass amendments that affect the entire state. Many of these constitutional amendments have contradicted each other and limit our ability to govern efficiently and effectively, such as the complex and negative interplay between provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights and the Gallagher Amendment. The statutory process for changing state laws and passing legislative initiatives would remain the same. Furthermore, Amendment 71 includes provisions that allow for repealing past amendments, in whole or in part, by the same simple majority by which it was initially adopted. We believe the State Constitution should address only our most vital governing principles, while preserving the flexibility to address evolving conditions and needs through the statutory and legislative processes.</p>		



PROPOSITION 107 – OPEN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>Amend Colorado’s statutes to establish a presidential primary in each presidential election year, replacing the current caucus system. This would also allow unaffiliated voters to participate in the party primary process and make Colorado a “winner take all” primary state.</p>	<p>The caucus system is confusing and inaccessible to many voters, especially to those with less flexible work hours and single parents. Changing to a primary would open the election to those populations, as well as to unaffiliated voters. The primary process would give voters multiple days to cast ballots, rather than fixed hours to participate in a caucus event.</p>	<p>This initiative could raise costs for tax payers, as the State and Counties will have to conduct presidential primary elections. These changes to a primary election system may add time and administrative costs to local governments due to confusion created by processing the ballots of unaffiliated voters. Unaffiliated voters who wish to participate in the selection of party candidates can already declare their affiliation to a political party and participate in the caucus process.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>This initiative effectively cleans up the confusion caused by the current caucus system. In Boulder County, we’ve seen caucus nights with over-crowded venues that have become inaccessible because of our high levels of voter participation and turn out. The new primary system restores clarity to our electoral process by advancing candidates who are supported by the majority of voters as well as allowing more citizens to participate.</p>		

PROPOSITION 108 – UNAFFILIATED ELECTORS VOTING IN PRIMARIES

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>Allows unaffiliated voters to vote in the primary elections of major political parties. Unaffiliated voters would receive a ballot and would have to choose which party’s primary to participate in. This does not tie an unaffiliated voter to declaring an affiliation with that political party.</p>	<p>The current system marginalizes and alienates a majority of our population, as unaffiliated voters are the largest voting block in Colorado. Because elections are publicly financed, they should be open to all tax payers and give all Coloradans a voice.</p>	<p>Gives unaffiliated voters more candidate choices than party members. It unfairly subjects the selection of candidates associated with political parties to outside influences. Parties are membership organizations and should be able to set their own governance rules.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>In Boulder County, 52% of our voters under the age of 40 are unaffiliated voters with only 21% of active voters participating in the primary process. We believe this measure will encourage more people to be involved in primary elections and will drive a broader-based dialogue amongst candidates leading to primary elections.</p>		



BALLOT ISSUE 4B SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES DISTRICT REAUTHORIZATION

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>The reauthorization of a sales tax that generates funding for arts, culture and science organizations throughout seven Front Range counties, including Boulder County. The tax amount is one cent on every \$10 of retail purchases. This tax was first approved by voters in 1988 and must be reauthorized every 12 years.</p>	<p>This tax has been a critical source of funding that generates approximately \$55 million a year for approximately 300 arts, cultural and scientific organizations. The SCFD tax provides reliable, and in many cases, critical operating support to local and regional arts and culture organizations. National studies have shown Coloradans go to movies, visit galleries, see plays or live music, read books and create art more than citizens in almost all other states. This seems to validate the impact that this funding has had for these opportunities throughout the Front Range over its 28 year history.</p>	<p>Only modest changes have been made to SCFD’s funding structure since SCFD was first created 28 years ago. The structure continues to allocate almost two-thirds of total SCFD funds to major art and cultural organizations in Denver while leaving little funding available to the mid- and small-size organizations, whose numbers have more than doubled since SCFD was first approved. Boulder County’s smaller organizations receive relatively low levels of funding versus their peers in other counties.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>The Boulder Chamber supports Issue 4B, the reauthorization of SCFD. The modest tax has a powerful positive economic impact locally and regionally while also contributing to the vibrancy of the arts and culture economy in Boulder County and across the Denver-metro region. The annual impact of SCFD-funded organizations includes over 10,000 jobs, 4.2 million students served, 14 million in total attendance and \$1.85 billion in total economic activity. Specific funding allocations have been defined to support smaller arts organizations.</p>		



BOULDER COUNTY BALLOT ISSUE 1B OPEN SPACE TAX EXTENSION

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>An extension of half (0.125%) of the current 0.25% sales and use tax for 15 years to provide funding to purchase key remaining Open Space properties and for continued management of existing Open Space. Includes funding for the construction of trails as well as restoring wetlands and areas along streams that were damaged by the 2013 floods.</p>	<p>Ballot issue 1B will protect and enhance the County's Open Space programs for an additional 15 years and for future generations. Open Space and its stewardship are critical components of Boulder County's quality of life and our community's commitment to environmental conservation, while also being a cornerstone of the facets that make Boulder such an attractive place for businesses.</p>	<p>Boulder County has two additional taxes that fund Open Space and the City of Boulder also collects taxes for this purpose. With our Open Space purchases nearly complete, existing tax revenues are adequate to meet the need without extending 1B.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber's Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>The Boulder Chamber supports continued stewardship of our natural environment and the protection of our community's treasured open spaces. Open Space is a key component to our community's high quality of life, making Boulder County an attractive area that continues to be economically vibrant, competitive and attractive to businesses now and into the future.</p>		



BOULDER COUNTY BALLOT ISSUE 1C SUSTAINABILITY TAX EXTENSION

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>A 15 year extension of half (0.125%) of the current 0.25% sales and use tax that currently goes to Open Space to fund sustainability infrastructure and programs. Examples include, but are not limited to, programs or infrastructure projects that promote energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, composting, local agriculture, alternative modes of transportation and climate change mitigation.</p>	<p>The measure is good for our environmental health and welfare, enhancing our resiliency and improving our economy. Currently, for every \$1 invested in Boulder County sustainability programs, our communities receive \$5 worth of benefits.</p>	<p>The Boulder County budget is adequate to fund sustainability programs without compromising existing programs. There is a lack of analysis about where the tax will make a positive impact.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: <i>NEUTRAL</i></p>		
<p>In line with our community’s shared environmental values, the Boulder Chamber supports sustainability programming that will increase our resiliency, promote energy efficiency and address climate change concerns. We believe there can be significant economic and environmental returns as a result of investment in these types of sustainability programs.</p> <p>With respect to the specific provision of Ballot Issue 1C, the Boulder Chamber believes additional information regarding the specific allocation of funding would give the business community greater assurance regarding the effective utilization of this tax investment and would better address concerns regarding competition with existing private sector services and solutions.</p>		



CITY OF BOULDER BALLOT ISSUE 2H – SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGE PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION TAX

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>A tax of two cents per ounce of sugar sweetened beverage products in the City of Boulder. Beverages that qualify contain at least five grams of caloric sweetener per twelve fluid ounces. Each distributor of sugar-sweetened beverage products shall pay the tax.</p>	<p>The intention of the tax is to protect the health, safety and well being of all in the City of Boulder. Consuming one sugar sweetened beverage a day increases the risk of childhood obesity, type two diabetes and death from cardiovascular disease. Health benefits should result as a goal of implementing this tax, thus reducing overall health care costs to businesses for their employees.</p>	<p>These taxes are typically passed on to the consumer and aren't; proven to have direct correlation to improving community health. These taxes rarely reach their intended goal because it allows distributors and retailers to distribute the tax across various products, increasing all prices, rather than solely that of beverages.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber's Position: <i>NEUTRAL</i></p>		
<p>Many of our member businesses support this initiative as a means to promote community health and reduce health care costs. However, many members also believe this initiative will have a negative economic impact upon a significant number of our home grown businesses in natural products as well as other sectors. Given the significant split on this issue amongst our membership, the Boulder Chamber is taking a neutral position.</p>		



BALLOT INITIATIVE 3A – BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATIONAL LEVY

What It Is	Supporters Say...	Opponents Say...
<p>A 1.7 mill increase to fund \$10 million towards capital construction, new/existing technology development and upgrades, as well as capital maintenance. Allows increasing up to 4 mills in 4 years thereafter up to \$26 million.</p>	<p>Maintains BVSD’s high quality of education, services, facilities and technologies. A quality educational system is a critical economic investment. This provides the funding to cover BVSD’s facility costs so that it can use limited state funding for classroom education.</p>	<p>The ballot language doesn’t clearly define where the funding will be utilized. There is too much flexibility that allows the school board to expand the mill levy up to the maximum amount without discretion. It is too soon for another BVSD tax increase after they received \$576 million in 2014.</p>
<p>The Boulder Chamber’s Position: SUPPORT</p>		
<p>Boulder’s economy has continually benefitted from having a strong school district as part of what makes the region attractive. An investment in the educational system provides value for our local economy both in preparing our future workforce and serving as a key attraction for top outside business talent that seek high quality schools for their children. We recognize that Colorado is failing to fund education at sufficient levels, which leaves the burden to local communities to identify revenue streams such as this initiative provides.</p> <p>The Boulder Chamber supports authorizing an operational mill levy to fund capital construction, new technology, upgrading existing technology, maintenance needs. This modest increase will drive additional dollars into classroom education beyond constrained state funding levels.</p> <p>It is important to note that commercial properties pay higher mill rates than residential properties. While we support Ballot Issue 3A, the Boulder Chamber appeals to the BVSD Board to be judicious and consult with the community, including business leaders, before taking aim at increasing the mill levy to authorized levels above the initial \$10 million revenue threshold.</p>		