



Denver DSA November 2020 Ballot Guide

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Dates / Fechas

OCTOBER 26 / 26 de octubre

Last day to update your registration to receive a ballot by mail

Last day to return your ballot by mail; return only to drop boxes

Fecha límite para registrarse para votar o actualizar su registro y aun recibir su boleta por correo

NOVEMBER 3 / 3 de noviembre

Last day to vote—**ballots must be received by 7 p.m.**

Puede votar en persona hasta las 7 PM en el día de la elección

Recommend NO vote

Recommend YES vote

Remain Neutral

[Statement on judge recommendations here](#)

CO Supreme Court

Justice [Melissa Hart](#): **Yes**

Justice [Carlos Samour](#): **No**

CO Court of Appeals

Judge [Ted Tow](#): **No**

Judge [Craig Welling](#): **No**

2nd Judicial District

Judge [Christopher Baumann](#): **No**

Judge [Martin Egelhoff](#): **No**

Judge [John Elliff](#): **No**

Judge [A. Jones](#): **No**

Judge [Michael Vallejos](#): **No**

Judge [Elizabeth Leith](#): **No**

Denver County

Judge [Beth Ann Faragher](#): **No**

Judge [Isabel Pallaras](#): **No**

Judge [Nicole Rodarte](#): **No**

Judge [Andre Rudolph](#): **No**

Judge [Barry Schwartz](#): **No**

Judge [Frances Simonet](#): **Yes**

Judge [Theresa Spahn](#): **No**

DENVER INITIATIVES

2A: Neutral

From Denver DSA's Ecosocialist Committee: Ballot Measure 2A asks Denver voters to decide whether a projected \$40 million annually shall be raised by a 0.25% increase in the city's sales taxes, from 8.31% to 8.56%, to be used to fund programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce other air pollution emissions, and fund climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

While the Committee understands the importance of adequate funding for the popular mandate to confront the sources of climate change and mitigation of and adaptation to its effects on our community, we cannot fully support the levying of those funds through a regressive taxation on consumption. Such taxes often impact most those who contribute the least to climate change. At the same time, such a sales tax is only indirectly levied on the sources of climate change and air pollution, and is unlikely to impact the state's carbon footprint or slow the rate of emissions from sources within the state or locality's jurisdiction. Though these funds might reduce emissions and promote environmental justice through the Denver Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency, the public has no true guarantee of the efficacy of the programs to be funded, the accessibility of the funds by those communities most impacted by climate change, and least of all, the political priorities of those ultimately responsible for distributing the money gathered from this tax.

2B: Neutral

Denver DSA has historically been firmly against regressive sales taxes. However, we have chosen to remain neutral on Initiative 2B, in large part because our comrades at Denver Homeless Out Loud have taken a stance tentatively in support of this initiative, and they have a much better understanding of issues affecting the unhoused community than we do. While more money for housing the unhoused is undoubtedly a good thing, we have concerns about aspects of this initiative.

For one, what the funds will be used for is to be determined by Denver's Department of Housing Stability. How much of the funding will be used to provide unhoused people with housing, as opposed to other, less effective means of addressing homelessness, is an open question. We are also

concerned about the lack of an input process that would take into consideration the views and priorities of people who are experiencing homelessness.

Finally, as a sales tax, 2B will take a greater percentage of the income of poor and working class people than the rich. While we firmly support housing as a human right, we believe the way to fund it is already clear: tax the rich. We advise everyone to make their own decision on how to vote on Initiative 2B.

2C: Yes

Denver DSA strongly supports Ballot Measure 2C, a measure which would give City Council authority to procure professional services, such as attorneys, without the mayor's approval. Initiatives 2C through 2E all broadly would take power out of the mayor's hands and provide city council more authority and oversight. And while it is an absolute necessity to take power out of our *current* mayor's hands, there is also a very strong argument to be made in favor of a weaker mayor vis-a-vis city council structure more broadly.

Denver's strong mayoral system benefits the wealthy. Our mayors historically are from (and funded by) the richest parts of the city. They are beholden to wealthy donors and real estate developers over the working class and poor. While our city council is by no means a stronghold of working class politics, the fact that council members are elected by the constituents of their districts, rather than the city at large (with the exception of the at-large seats) means the antidemocratic influence of the wealthy is mitigated. In addition, Montbello residents are impacted by different issues than those living in Cherry Creek, so council members are able to be more responsive to the needs of their particular district, instead of a mayor who represents all of Denver.

2D: Yes

If passed, Ballot Measure 2D would create a 19-seat, unpaid Board of Transportation and Infrastructure. There is nothing in the language of the measure to indicate how much actual power this board would have. While it's entirely possible the board would exist as a resume-padding opportunity for aspiring politicians, Denver DSA has taken a stance in favor of this measure because the majority of the seats would be appointed by city council rather than the mayor's office. We hope this measure will play

a part, however small it may be, in reducing the mayor's power and providing city council with more discretion.

2E: Yes

Denver DSA is in favor of Ballot Measure 2E, which would give city council some oversight over certain mayoral appointments. This is for much the same reason that we are in favor of Measures 2C and 2D: to democratize our city's governance. Another reason to support 2E is that it would require City Council to consent to appointments including Chief of Police, Denver Sheriff, and City Attorney. The long history of murder and brutality committed by police in Denver – and across the state and country – have demonstrated the desperate need to bring accountability to those putatively responsible for law enforcement in our city. 2E is one small step towards that accountability.

2F: Neutral

In theory, the Denver Charter being updated to allow for, say, City Council meetings to take place over Zoom rather than in person makes perfect sense. But recently we've seen City Council use the COVID-19 pandemic, and the necessity for social distancing, as an excuse to shield itself from public comment, scrutiny, and criticism. Our major concern with Measure 2F is it could be used to further insulate City Council from the public. With this in mind, we advise voters to make their own decision on Initiative 2F.

2G: Yes

Ballot measure 2G would allow city council to make changes to the Denver budget mid-year, something that currently can only be done by the mayor's office. Allowing city council to propose budget changes would make the budgeting process more democratic. Since 2G's language prevents the budget amendments from causing expenses to exceed revenue, it would provide potential pathways for efforts like defunding the police, where the money already exists within the city budget, and only needs redirecting.

2H: Yes

Denver initiative 2H would exempt the City and County of Denver from Senate Bill 152, which forbids local governments in Colorado from spending money to operate Internet services publicly. The city would join over 100 municipalities and counties in Colorado that have already passed

their own version of this initiative, many of which now enjoy internet provided not-for-profit and operated at the cost of running it. Denver residents currently pay a premium to Comcast and CenturyLink to ensure their investors earn constant returns. Residents of Denver who could not afford their price suffered and continue to suffer disproportionately during the COVID-19 epidemic, having to rely on low quality or publicly available internet to work and for their children to be able to attend school. This initiative would not create a public utility in Denver or dedicate any funds to doing so; it only creates the option to do so in the future. As a socialist organization, administering infrastructure as a non-profit public utility rather than through private for-profit enterprise is one of our core values, and Denver DSA voted as a chapter to endorse this initiative.

2I: Neutral

This initiative was proposed by City employees to switch several job titles in city government to appointed roles rather than career service roles, without increasing expenditures. We remain neutral on this measure.

2J: Yes

By relying on police discretion, Denver's pit bull ordinance has undoubtedly meant black and brown people experience disproportionate, unprovoked citations. Police officers must determine whether a dog is indeed a pitbull, which allows for bias, subjectivity, and enforcement errors. This ballot measure follows the ethos of defunding the police by allocating the needed resources away from cops and providing them to a qualified Animal Protection Officer who handles pet incidents on a case-by-case basis.

4A: Yes

A mill levy is a form of property tax that helps stabilize operating costs for institutions like schools. This one for Denver Public Schools (DPS) is expected to cost homeowners \$4.25/month or \$51/year for the median valued house (\$465K). DPS says they could use an extra \$4/month per person, and we're inclined to believe them, particularly in the midst of the ongoing pandemic.

4B: Neutral

We remain neutral on this issue. While schools are woefully underfunded and any resource is welcome, increasing the debt load of schools is not ideal. Funding should come from equitable taxation, not school debt.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

Amendment 76: No

In addition to being redundant, Amendment 76 sends a racist message to the undocumented among us who are exploited in our economy. Amendment 76 would also disenfranchise approximately 10,000 Colorado voters who now have the ability to vote under the Colorado Votes Act. Passed in 2019, the Colorado Votes Act allows 17-year-olds to vote in a primary if they will be 18 by election day. Amendment 76 would eliminate those voters while telling immigrants they are not welcome here.

Amendment 77: Neutral

We are a Denver Metro chapter, and therefore believe workers living in Central City, Black Hawk, or Cripple Creek should decide this matter for themselves.

Proposition 113: Yes

We believe democracy should reflect the idea that one person equals one vote. **There is no justification for a system that hands votes to a small group of elites who aren't obligated to reflect the citizens they represent.** CO Legislature has already signed on to the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC), which would award our presidential electors to the national popular vote winner. Prop. 113 would affirm the legislature's decision. The pact relies on enough states joining to equal 270 electoral votes. If Colorado joins, we'll be 73% of the way there.

Proposition 114: Yes

The reintroduction of grey wolves in Colorado would right a historical wrong against this iconic species. In the 1940s, the force of a culturally-inherited fear of wolves as people-killers eliminated the wolf population in Colorado. Not only is this false (wolves rarely attack humans unless provoked or cornered), the act itself is destructive and illustrates settler colonial tendencies toward anything that obstructs a capitalistic, land-as-property worldview. We know now wolves represent a keystone species that can stabilize ecosystems and increase biodiversity, as seen in their reintroduction to the Yellowstone Basin in the early 90s.

While grey wolves have been sighted recently in CO, without Prop 114 these wolves would be subject to the same oppression that caused their

eradication in the first place. Prop. 114 includes funding for Colorado Parks & Wildlife to manage the wolf population and compensate livestock owners for losses—funding that wouldn't otherwise exist. Finally, any serious climate or environmental justice plan must put biodiversity, wilderness protection & expansion and reduced reliance on ruminant livestock in the American diet front and center. We hope propositions like this will accelerate Colorado's already-shifting economic and land-use priorities toward true sustainable policies for all.

Proposition 115: No

Proposition 115 would eliminate access to abortion after 22 weeks with no exceptions for health risks (not even rape or incest) to the pregnant parent or pregnancies.

Reproductive healthcare, including abortions, is an essential human right and should not be controlled by the state, employers, or any other institution. Proponents for 115 have clearly stated that if this ballot measure passes, this would open the door to continued abortion restrictions in Colorado. Colorado is one of only 6 states (plus D.C.) that currently places no restrictions on a person's right to abortion, and because of this, CO acts a refuge for people seeking reproductive care regionally. Proposition 115 would threaten the health, well-being, and bodily autonomy of individuals in Colorado and neighboring states like Wyoming, Kansas, Utah and Texas. Denver DSA voted as a chapter to endorse the No on 115 campaign.

Proposition 116: No

In the face of a statewide budget deficit and cuts to essential services like Medicaid & the child welfare hotline, we cannot afford another tax cut that will primarily benefit the wealthiest individuals in Colorado. This reduction would give the average tax payer in Colorado just a \$37 break annually, but make thousands for people like Jared Polis and Phillip Anschutz.

Proposition 117: No

TABOR is a conservative nightmare tax law that severely limits what our government can do with revenue, even if voters approve legislation. It's an insult to voters' intellect to assume we don't understand that the important measures we vote for will require revenue funding. This is a tactic used by the wealthy to employ confusing and classist language to intentionally mislead voters. Separating the process of funding legislation from passing

legislation is an intentional roadblock to fulfilling the voters' intentions.

We believe that if an enterprise is important and serves the public well, it should be brought into the realm of a publicly accountable, elected institution run by voters and workers. **Prop 117 would require that state enterprises adhere to TABOR restrictions, even though they've previously been exempt.** The state enterprises we have must be defended from attacks like Proposition 117, and the ones we want to create—like a state-run bank or health care option—don't need extra hurdles to overcome.

Proposition 118: Yes

Access to a public insurance program for paid family and medical leave would be a radical shift of power from employers to workers. This measure gives workers up to 12 weeks of leave if they have a serious health condition (including mental health conditions), are taking care of a family member with a serious condition, or have a new child. Four additional weeks will be available for pregnancy or birth complications. Local governments can opt out, along with businesses with private plans. Average Colorado workers would only pay \$3.83 per week for this benefit.

Proposition 118 would be incredibly impactful for working families, working women in particular. Proposition 118 would validate the time and energy needed to care for ourselves and our loved ones. It puts people first and acknowledges that they should not have to choose between paying bills and taking care of themselves or their family. Denver DSA voted as a chapter to endorse this proposition.

Amendment B: Yes

The ideal socialist policy for Colorado's budget is a repeal of TABOR and an end to austerity measures more broadly. However, in the near term, approving Amendment B would be a net positive. The Gallagher Amendment places a cap on residential property taxes in relation to commercial property taxes, and often triggers an automatic reduction to the residential property tax assessment rate. Due to the massive projected shortfall in the state budget caused by the pandemic, this would trigger steep austerity measures. Amendment B would repeal the Gallagher Amendment. According to the conservative Tax Foundation, Colorado residential property taxes are the sixth-lowest in the nation, and essential public services rely on these taxes. We acknowledge forgoing future

automatic tax cuts may strain some households, but we weigh that possibility against sharp cuts to public services. Ultimately Amendment B is a partial and imperfect solution to a complex problem.

Amendment C: Neutral

We take no position on this matter.

Proposition EE: No

This proposition would disproportionately hurt low-income people, not only as a regressive sales tax, but also because 33% of people below the poverty line smoke cigarettes, more than any other income group according to the CDC.