

Denver DSA

November 2021 Voter Guide



Resources

Check your registration or register to vote at [GoVoteColorado.gov](https://www.govotecolorado.gov)

Track your ballot at [BallotTRACE.org](https://www.ballottrace.org)

Find drop-box locations and poll centers [here](#)

If you have questions, call **311** and dial option **8** or text **56003**

Important dates

Monday, October 25

Last day to update your registration in order to receive your ballot by mail and last day to return your ballot by mail

November 2- Election Day

Last day to vote or turn in your ballot — ballots must be received by **7pm**

Candidates

Denver School Board

Scott Esserman - Director at Large

- Recommend **YES** vote

Scott is endorsed by the Denver teachers union and Colorado Working Families Party. He believes in the Community School Model, which emphasizes collaboration and healing. The foundations of the community school model are: a strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum; high quality teaching and learning; inclusive leadership; restorative, positive behavior practices; family and community partnerships; and coordinating and integrating wraparound supports.

Xochitl Gaytan - Director District 2

- Recommend **YES** vote

Xochitl is endorsed by the Denver teachers union and Colorado Working Families Party. She believes equitably-funded public school education is a right for all and that students from all communities, backgrounds, ethnicities should have a quality school to attend in the community they live in.

Carrie Olson - Director District 3

- Recommend **YES** vote

Carrie is the incumbent director for District 3. Carrie has progressive positions on education, which includes opposing charter schools, narrowing the achievement gap between students of varying income levels, and opposing the idea that standardized tests are an effective measure of student performance.

Michelle Quattlebaum - Director District 4

- Recommend **YES** vote

Michelle is a mother of three Denver Public Schools graduates, current DPS employee, and lifelong public education advocate. She is endorsed by the Colorado Working Families, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, and the Colorado Education Association. She will fight for union apprenticeships and trades, equitable funding to classrooms, and will fight to expand curriculum to include the voices of BIPOC individuals. Finally, DPS is at risk of losing the voice of a Black woman for the first time since Rachel B. Noel in 1965, she believes it's important to maintain the voice of Black women on the Denver School Board.

Aurora City Council

Crystal Murillo - Ward 1

- Recommend **YES** vote

Crystal is the incumbent City Council member for Ward 1 in Aurora. Crystal works directly with Denver DSA endorsed electeds, Juan Marcano and Alison Coombs. It is vital that Crystal be re-elected so that the Aurora City Council can enact progressive measures with a Democratic majority.

Bryan Lindstrom - Ward 2

- Recommend **YES** vote

Bryan is a member of the Denver DSA and is endorsed by the Denver DSA. Bryan stated that he pursued an endorsement from the Denver DSA because he shares the organization's values. In particular, he identifies as pro-worker, pro-union, and pro-labor rights. In the city council he plans to fight for increasing the minimum wage in Aurora. Bryan has helped organize teacher strikes and has been on the picket line for multiple other strikes.

Ruben Medina - Ward 3

- Recommend **YES** vote

Ruben is not endorsed by the Denver DSA. However, Ruben is uniting in his campaign efforts with Bryan Lindstrom, and would work with Bryan and other Denver DSA-endorsed candidates if elected to City Council.

John Ronquillo - At-Large

- Recommend **YES** vote

John is not endorsed by the Denver DSA. However, John is uniting in his campaign efforts with Bryan Lindstrom, and would work with Bryan and other Denver DSA-endorsed candidates if elected to City Council.

Candice Bailey - At-Large

- Recommend **YES** vote

Candice is not endorsed by the Denver DSA. However, Candice is uniting in her campaign efforts with Bryan Lindstrom, and would work with Bryan and other Denver DSA-endorsed candidates if elected to City Council.

Aurora School Board

Tramaine Duncan - School Board Director

- Recommend **YES** vote

Tramaine is not endorsed by the Denver DSA. However, Traimaine's goal if elected is to increase awareness and involvement of marginalized groups in the political process. Specifically, he is centering his campaign around equity and amplifying community voices to work towards his larger goal of creating a society that is beneficial to all persons, not just the rich and able-bodies.

Amendments & Propositions

Amendment 78

● Remain **NEUTRAL**

Would prohibit state agencies from spending money received for a particular purpose (custodial money) without direct allocation by the state legislature. It would also require that custodial money be deposited into a newly created fund, where interest earned on that fund would be transferred to the state's General Fund. Finally, it would require that the state legislature allocate any spending from the new fund each year following a public hearing.

- The benefits of this amendment would be that it would improve visibility and accountability into how the state spends its custodial money. This would ostensibly allow for more public input into the spending of funds.
- On the flip side, the negative aspect of this amendment is that it creates another level of bureaucracy to the state's spending choices. For example, the state has already been incredibly slow to distribute the rental relief funds it has received as part of the Covid-19 stimulus package. Increasing the time it takes to distribute these kinds of funds would likely have a negative impact.

Proposition 119

● Recommend **NO** vote

Would create the Colorado Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress program which would help certain Colorado youth access and pay for out-of-school learning opportunities like tutoring. This program would be paid for by raising retail marijuana taxes and using other existing state funds.

- The reasoning for opposing Proposition 119 is similar to the reason Denver DSA recommends a "No" vote on Initiated Ordinance 300. Specifically, sales taxes are a regressive form of tax that impacts the poor & most vulnerable members of our community the most. When looking to fund something raising property or income taxes are almost always a more effective & equitable means of raising those funds.
- "We cannot allow public education funds to be taken and given to private and out-of-state companies who have no oversight or accountability to Colorado taxpayers. Proposition 119 will hurt our local public school districts. Colorado's public schools are among the most poorly funded classrooms in the nation." - *No on Prop 119*

Proposition 120

● Recommend **NO** vote

Proposes lowering the property tax assessment rates for multifamily housing and lodging properties. Also allows the state to retain money above constitutional spending limits if it is used to fund existing property tax exemptions.

- This initiative was sponsored and funded by Colorado Rising Action and Unite for Colorado, two conservative groups in favor of limited government. The argument against this initiative is pretty straightforward — it would lower tax revenues which are

gathered from a group of taxpayers that can certainly afford to pay their fair share (i.e., landlords).

- “The state of Colorado is already underfunded our schools by this year it's going to be \$572 million. Over the last ten years, it's been about \$10 billion altogether. We are already short-funded, and cutting our revenue any further is going to kneecap our kid's futures.” - *Kevin Vick, Vice President of the Colorado Education Association*
- “The ballot measure says taxes should be reduced a \$1 billion dollars but it's only going to be \$200 million dollars because of what the legislature did [by passing Senate Bill 293]. There is a potential for school districts to see funds reduced, especially in areas of the state that haven't see dramatic increases in property values. If you are a renter, you aren't going to get any tax cuts from this. The only people who are going to get a tax cut from this are those who own property which is about 40 percent of the state.” - *Elliot Goldbaum, Colorado Financial Institute*

Referred Questions

Referred Question 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D

● Recommend **NO** vote

These four ballot measures make up \$260 million of a proposed \$450 million infrastructure bond package: 2A, \$104 million (projects related to libraries, museums, and entertainment venues) 2B, \$38.6 million (acquisition, conversion, and/or construction of shelters); 2C, \$63.3 million (bike, pedestrian, road, and transportation projects); and 2D, \$54 million (construction and maintenance projects for Denver parks).

With the economic uncertainty and record housing instability brought on by COVID-19, this is not the right time to saddle Denver residents with even more debt. If the city is not able to generate enough revenue to pay back the bond financing the projects outlined in 2A-2D, the city will raise property taxes to make up the difference. This puts an undue burden on taxpayers during a time when they can least afford it.

The arena and 1909 Market proposed in 2E are supposed to be the economic drivers that make the rest of the bond package (2A-2D) work, but with serious concerns around those projects' feasibility, passing 2A-2D will lay a significant financial burden on the shoulders of Denver residents. Many of the projects that would be funded by these measures are important and would be beneficial to Denverites -- but the timing isn't right to take out a bond backed by property taxes. Two thirds of 2017's Elevate Denver bond package funds remain unspent. Accelerating those projects could help boost Denver's economy in the short term without taking on even more debt.

Referred Question 2E

● Recommend **NO** vote

During a global pandemic causing Denverites to face economic uncertainty, unemployment, eviction, and foreclosure, this is NOT the time to allow the City of Denver to borrow \$190 million to fund the construction of a new arena at the National Western Center (NWC) and renovate the 1909 Market. The feasibility study for the Market says that it will not be profitable with the current surrounding population density, and the feasibility study for the Arena notes that it will not be competitive with other venues since it offers the same size and amenities. If the sites aren't profitable (and they almost certainly won't be), the bond will be paid back through increased property taxes. In 2015, Denver approved a tourism-backed bond to fund the NWC, promising no new taxes -- another broken promise to Denver voters.

The surrounding neighborhoods of Globeville, Elyria & Swansea (GES) vehemently oppose the Arena and Market development, and want other investments, like a grocery store and improvements to sidewalks, public transportation, and public spaces. This is the latest in a long line of exploitative, racist developments that dispossess GES residents of their community land. This bond was pitched as a recovery package -- but a recovery for who? Not for GES, and not for average Denverites.

Referred Question 2F

● Recommend **NO** vote

Safe and Sound Denver is a misguided, classist attempt to repeal a city ordinance, commonly known as group living, that Denver City Council overwhelmingly passed in February 2021. Passing group living was an important step in modernizing Denver's zoning code to better meet the needs of tenants as well as individuals that want or need to live in residential care facilities, community corrections facilities, and homeless shelters. For those seeking living arrangements such as cooperative-style housing or simply having multiple, unrelated roommates, group living expands available housing options. This is especially critical at a point when Denver tenants are facing ever-greater levels of precarity from rapidly rising housing costs and limited legal protections. Group living will not fully solve Denver's housing crisis -- which is rooted in the artificial scarcity of affordable housing options created by capitalism -- but it is a meaningful step towards prioritizing the needs of tenants. Safe and Sound Denver has built a campaign rife with misinformation and fear-mongering, relying on harmful stereotypes about renters, young people, people of color, the unhoused, and those transitioning out of the criminal justice system. It is critical that the Denver DSA pushes against these sentiments and keeps Denverites housed.

Referred Question 2G

● Recommend **YES** vote

Denver DSA is committed to ending police violence and, in general, supports efforts to provide oversight of police and increase investigation into police wrongdoings. The Office of the Independent (OIM) and its Independent Monitor are responsible for providing

independent oversight into misconduct by Denver's uniformed officers and deputies. Currently, the Independent Monitor, as well as the Director of Public Safety, Chief of Police, and Sheriff, are all appointed by the Mayor — a clear concentration of power.

Referred Question 2H

- Remain **NEUTRAL**

Initiated Ordinances

Initiated Ordinance 300

- Recommend **NO** vote

Sales taxes are a regressive form of tax that impacts the poor & most vulnerable members of our community the most. When looking to fund something raising property or income taxes are almost always a more effective & equitable means of raising those funds. This ordinance would raise the tax on marijuana by a full 25% with all funds earmarked for a single institution (a Public-Private Partnership wing of the University of Colorado) for a single purpose. The last year has highlighted the new future of global pandemics we now live in, but a regressive tax to fund a single PPP institution does not seem like the right path forward.

- "Pandemic Research Fund: This measure would raise Denver's municipal sales tax on marijuana purchase from 5.5% to 7%, and direct the revenue raised towards pandemic research at the University of Colorado Denver's CityCenter. The measure is backed by Delaware-based group Guarding Against Pandemics, which as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit is not required to disclose its donors." - *Colorado Newsline*

Initiated Ordinance 301

- Remain **NEUTRAL**

Ordinance 301 concerns the use of the land that was formerly the Park Hill Golf Course. This ordinance would allow the residents of the city of Denver to vote on the land use. On the surface this might seem like the right way to decide how the land is used. However, the interests of all of the residents of Denver may not match the interests of residents who currently live near the Park Hill Golf Course. For example, residents of Northeast Park Hill are predominantly black and low-income. These residents are already beginning to be forced out of this neighborhood due to the increasing cost of living. These residents would likely prefer that the Park Hill Golf Course is not developed in such a way that more of them would be forced to move. This desire might not align with the wishes of Denver as a whole. Therefore, Denver DSA has a neutral position on this Ordinance.

Initiated Ordinance 302

● Recommend **NO** vote

Just like Ordinance 301, Ordinance 302 concerns the use of the land that was formerly the Park Hill Golf Course. Ordinance 302 would change the definition of which conservation easements are eligible for a citywide vote, conveniently exempting the golf course. In other words, Ordinance 302 would allow Westside Investment Partners (the current owners of the land) to choose how to develop this land. This investment company will almost certainly not develop the land in a way that is in the best interests of current residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. In particular, Northeast Park Hill is currently predominantly a black and low-income neighborhood. These residents are already being pushed out of the area due to the increasing cost of living. Allowing an investment company to develop (and likely begin to gentrify) the land near this neighborhood will only hurt those residents.

Initiated Ordinance 303

● Recommend **NO** vote

This classist ballot initiative is another attempt to expand the assault on Denver's homeless. Disguised as a way to create additional safe outdoor shelter for our unhoused neighbors, it would not require the city to create a single shelter site. This initiative would create a complaint-based system to report homeless residents. If adopted, it would mandate enforcement of the ordinance (D.R.M.C. Sec 38-86.2), also known as the "urban camping ban" within 72-hours of any individual's complaint. It would create a pro-surveillance reporting system that utilizes a problematic community policing approach which would increase the economic burden on people experiencing poverty and further criminalize seeking emergency shelter in-place within Denver. The City of Denver has estimated that this would cost tax-payers millions of dollars in enforcement costs alone. Additionally, it would allow individuals to sue The City of Denver if it does not take enforcement action following any complaints. This will cost taxpayers millions of dollars in litigation.

Denver DSA has already opposed the "urban camping ban" during the 2019 "Right to Rest" campaign and stands in solidarity with advocacy-groups and our unhoused neighbors. This unjust law has been subject to multiple legal challenges. And, as a result of federal court orders, the city must fulfill obligations to unhoused individuals including providing 7-days notice before eviction. This initiative is inconsistent with these federal court orders and will likely open the city to even more legal costs. This initiative would add a cruel amendment to one of Denver's most uncompassionate ordinances. Housing is a human right and this initiative directly undermines access to one critical form of emergency housing.

Initiated Ordinance 304

● Recommend **NO** vote

While it is recognized that Sales taxes are the most regressive form of taxation (i.e. drastically impact the poor the most) many of the sales taxes cited as a reason for this initiative are a result of progressive social programs in the city passed by voters over the last few years. The proposed cap on sales & use tax would only result in a savings of \$30 dollars per household per year, while preventing the city and its people from attempting to raise revenue for other programs in the future. Plus, it's being championed by the Chair of the local Republican party.

- "Enough Taxes Already: Also filed by [Denver GOP Chair] Flicker, this measure seeks to cap Denver's sales tax rates by inserting a "maximum tax" clause into its municipal code. Its impact is likely to be minimal, since as an ordinance, rather than a city charter amendment, the provision could be repealed by City Council, and Denver sales tax hikes are already subject to voter-approval requirements under the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights." - *Colorado Newsline*