

## PTA ADVOCACY UPDATE

### Register to vote!

With a big election coming up, now is the time for our members to do all they can to help PTA accomplish our mission of advocating for children and youth. The first thing is to make sure you are registered to vote (or that your registration is up to date). Go to [www.GoVoteColorado.gov](http://www.GoVoteColorado.gov) to register or update your registration and ensure that you receive a ballot in the mail.

### Vote the PTA way!

The next step is for all members to advocate our positions on ballot issues, which we took based on our support for the following:

- Adequate state funding to local school districts and higher education for students in pre-kindergarten through post-secondary education.
- Safeguarding all resources and revenues designated for education, and full funding of Amendment 23 (Article IX, Section 17 of the State Constitution), as the voters intended.
- Laws providing necessary services, policies, and requirements for the support of the general good health, nutritional, and physical and mental well-being of all Colorado children, youth, and their families.

Here are PTA's positions and some information about the ballot issues we care about:

- **VOTE YES on Amendment B, Repeal Property Tax Assessment Rates** – Without the permanent freeze on residential property tax assessment rates that Amendment B will provide by repealing the Gallagher Amendment, the rates will drop next year from 7.15% to 5.88% and cause a \$246 million drop in formula funding to school districts, which the state will have to backfill; a \$490 million drop in district revenues overall, including mill levy overrides and bonds; and a \$203 million drop for local governments. The state does not have the revenue to backfill K-12, because even after years of slow progress in catching up to funding levels prior to the Great Recession, Colorado has now fallen \$1.2 billion behind its Constitutional obligation to maintain and increase K-12 school funding (through the “budget stabilization factor”). And Colorado's already underfunded public schools are facing another \$500 million in budget cuts next year due to the pandemic. Dire financial consequences are ahead if Amendment B doesn't pass.
- **VOTE YES on Proposition EE, Tobacco and E-Cigarette Tax Increase for Health and Education** – Colorado's teen vaping rate is the highest in the country, yet vaping and nicotine products are not taxed in the same way as cigarettes. Raising the price of tobacco and vape will encourage users to quit and discourage price-sensitive teens from ever starting. Revenue from the tobacco-vape tax will provide \$375 million for K-12 education over the next 2.5 years – including \$90 million earmarked for rural schools. The tax will also provide \$2 billion over 10 years to support universal preschool. Currently the Colorado Preschool Program has funding to serve only 40% of eligible children and is among the lowest funded preschool program in the country. Proposition EE will fund 10 hours per week of free preschool for all children in Colorado before their first year in kindergarten, starting in 2023.
- **VOTE NO on Proposition 116, Decrease State Income Tax Rate** – With the “budget stabilization factor” underfunding schools at \$1.2 billion, another \$500 million in budget cuts expected due to the pandemic, and the pandemic placing more students in poverty,

increasing the need for mental health support and high-quality technology, and making exceptional demands on educators, students and their families are already being severely impacted. The permanent tax rate reduction from Proposition 116 would cost the state about \$350 million next year, while saving the average taxpayer in Colorado only about \$40, and yet saving the wealthiest Coloradans between \$200 and \$800. At a time when more cuts will need to be made to balance the state budget, taking more money away to give mainly to the wealthy does not make sense.

- **VOTE NO on Proposition 117, Require Voter Approval for Certain New Enterprises** – While this measure has no direct economic impact on the state budget, to the extent that it causes policymakers to create fewer state enterprises, it will decrease state government services, potentially shifting a portion of economic activity from the public sector to the private sector. The state has used enterprise funds to fill budget gaps in the past, and there are very few other budget “workarounds” available because of TABOR. Proposition 117 is an attempt to put up more obstacles for keeping state services adequately funded.
- **VOTE YES on Proposition 118, Paid Family and Medical Leave** – Proposition 118 would implement a state-run family and medical leave program for up to 12 weeks of leave. To fund the program, the measure requires employers and employees to pay a 0.9% “payroll premium” (tax) directly from employee wages – like a FICA tax; businesses with fewer than 10 employees won’t have to pay anything, but their employees would still be covered. The average employee would pay only \$4.50/week. Currently, 4 out of 5 Colorado employees do not have access to any family or medical leave. Workers who need it the most often are the ones without this benefit. For the average worker, this benefit pays for itself if it is used once in a 40-year career. There are 8 other states that have this program, and the results show that employers have increased retention and morale, while employees no longer must make an impossible choice between their families and their jobs.