

THE PROTECT COLORADO'S FUTURE COALITION



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Coloradans launch 2026 ballot push for graduated state income tax

New ballot measure proposals would cut taxes for 98 percent of Coloradans, raise revenue to address budget crisis

DENVER, CO — September 3, 2025 — The Protect Colorado's Future coalition today announced plans to put a graduated income tax on the 2026 ballot. This proposal would lower taxes for 98 percent of Coloradans, while raising taxes on individuals and corporations making more than \$500,000 a year.

The proposal comes in direct response to Colorado's budget crisis, caused by state revenue limits and federal budget cuts. This budget gap has led to \$1.5 billion in cuts to vital state programs this year alone. The state's existing budget squeeze forced massive program cuts earlier this year, but President Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" threw our state into free fall, taking away funds for healthcare, food assistance, and schools to benefit giant corporations and give tax breaks to the wealthiest.

Protect Colorado's Future says it's time to fix the state's tax system. For 50 years, Colorado used a graduated income tax system, in which those with higher incomes paid higher taxes. This system ended in 1987, when an anti-tax legislature replaced it with an inequitable "flat tax," lowering taxes on those making the most and gradually draining the state budget. The coalition aims to ask voters to fix that injustice through a ballot measure in 2026, and began that process today by filing three versions of a ballot initiative.

"Colorado is at a turning point," said Chris deGruy Kennedy, President and CEO of the Bell Policy Center, a member of the coalition. "For more than three decades, an upside-down tax code has hurt Colorado's schools, health care, childcare and the environment. We've made the wealthy even wealthier while everyone else struggles to keep up. The cruel cuts to healthcare and

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the absurd corporate tax giveaways in the federal budget bill have pushed Colorado over the edge, and only the voters of Colorado have the power to make the wealthy pay their fair share and restore funding to critical state priorities.”

Colorado is especially vulnerable to federal cuts because a state constitutional amendment called the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights, or TABOR, creates an arbitrary budget formula that legislators must follow, restricting the state’s ability to fund essential public services. The amendment also makes the 1987 flat tax permanent, unless overturned at the ballot. The result is seen in this year’s state budget: a \$1.2 billion dollar deficit impacting every Coloradan, from young children to older adults, in all parts of the state.

“Our generation is tired of waiting for someone else to save our future while our economic security gets worse with every failed minimum wage increase, additional hundreds of dollars added to our rent, and funding cuts to programs we rely on like Medicaid and Higher Education,” said Christina Soliz, Executive Director of New Era Colorado, another member of the coalition. “While the wealthy continue to thrive, young people are questioning whether Colorado is even a feasible place to build their lives. We’re taking our future into our own hands, and that begins with demanding the wealthy pay their fair share.”

The graduated income tax proposal will help recapture some of the [\\$71,000 the wealthiest Coloradans](#) will receive in 2026 from Trump’s tax cuts, reinvesting those dollars back into classrooms, healthcare, childcare, and other state priorities that could include food security, public safety, or workforce development programs.

Additional quotes from member organizations

- Brace Gibson, Policy Director at Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger: “It’s time to put people first and build a fairer tax system that ensures every Coloradan can meet their basic needs like putting food on the table. Outdated policies like TABOR and federal tax breaks for the wealthy make that harder. We can and should do better by investing in food access, schools, healthcare, transportation, and other essential services that all of our communities rely on.”
- Kathy White, Executive Director at Colorado Fiscal Institute: “Colorado’s working families shouldn’t have to pick up the tab so the wealthiest get a \$71,000-a-year gift from Congress — especially when TABOR has already tied our hands for decades. A graduated income tax is just common sense: 98% of us get a tax cut, and the folks doing really well chip in a fair share to keep our schools strong, our healthcare system solid, and our communities thriving. That’s how we build a Colorado where everyone gets ahead, not just the lucky few.”
- Heather Tritten, President and CEO of the Colorado Children’s Campaign: “A new approach to income taxes would open up a world of opportunity for Colorado’s children and communities. Imagine a future where Colorado can build the schools, health care system, child care supports, and strong, safe, generous communities our children need

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and deserve. Imagine a future where our state's resources match the true prosperity of our communities. Imagine a future where we are not as vulnerable to the whims of federal policymakers. This proposal is a step toward that future.”

About the Protect Colorado's Future coalition

Protect Colorado's Future is a coalition of concerned Coloradans represented by the following nonprofit organizations:

[The Bell Policy Center](#)

[Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger](#)

[Colorado Center on Law and Policy](#)

[Colorado Children's Campaign](#)

[Colorado Consumer Health Initiative](#)

[Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition](#)

[Colorado Fiscal Institute](#)

[Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights](#)

[Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition](#)

[Counties & Commissioners Acting Together](#)

[Great Education Colorado](#)

[New Era Colorado](#)