

Building a Better  
**Colorado**

**Presentation to  
Colorado Counties, Inc  
Nov 30, 2015**



**WHO are we?**



# Who is “Building a Better Colorado”?

A non-partisan group of civic leaders statewide who’ve come together with a shared concern for our state’s future.

## Hank Brown

frmr U.S. Senator

## Gigi Dennis

frmr Secretary of State

## Tim Foster

President, Colo Mesa Univ

## Michael Hancock

Mayor of Denver

## John Hickenlooper

Governor of Colorado

## Rebecca Kourlis

frmr Supreme Court Justice

## Phyllis Norris

Mayor of Grand Junction

## Gale Norton

frmr U.S. Sec of the Interior

## Tom Norton

frmr State Senator

## Federico Pena

frmr Mayor of Denver

## Bill Ritter

frmr Governor of Colorado

## Roy Romer

frmr Governor of CO

## Ken Salazar

frmr U.S. Sec of the Interior

## Gail Schwartz

frmr State Senator

## John Suthers

Mayor of Colorado Springs

## Wellington Webb

frmr Mayor of Denver

**WHAT are we doing?**



# WHAT are we doing?

- **We're teeing up a conversation.**

**We're concerned about what we see as a growing disconnect between citizens and their government, as evidenced by:**

- the increasing number of amendments to our constitution
- the decreasing number of citizens who participate in our election process
- the decreasing ability of our state government to meet the expectations of it's citizens

- **We're engaging Coloradans in this conversation.**

**We believe the pathway to a better Colorado lies in engaging citizens statewide in a constructive conversation about what THEY want their state to be.**

- **We're taking action.**

**We are committed to supporting implementation of consensus policy recommendations.**

## WHAT are we NOT doing?

- **We are NOT advocating for any particular policy recommendation. We want to hear YOUR opinion.**

**HOW are we going to  
“engage citizens”?**



# Engaging Coloradans in 3 Ways

Building A Better Colorado



Bi-partisan committees of subject matter experts develop options for consideration

**Summer 2015**



Options discussed and debated at Community Summits across Colorado AND online

**Fall 2015**



Learnings from Community Meetings and online inform objective survey research late 2015

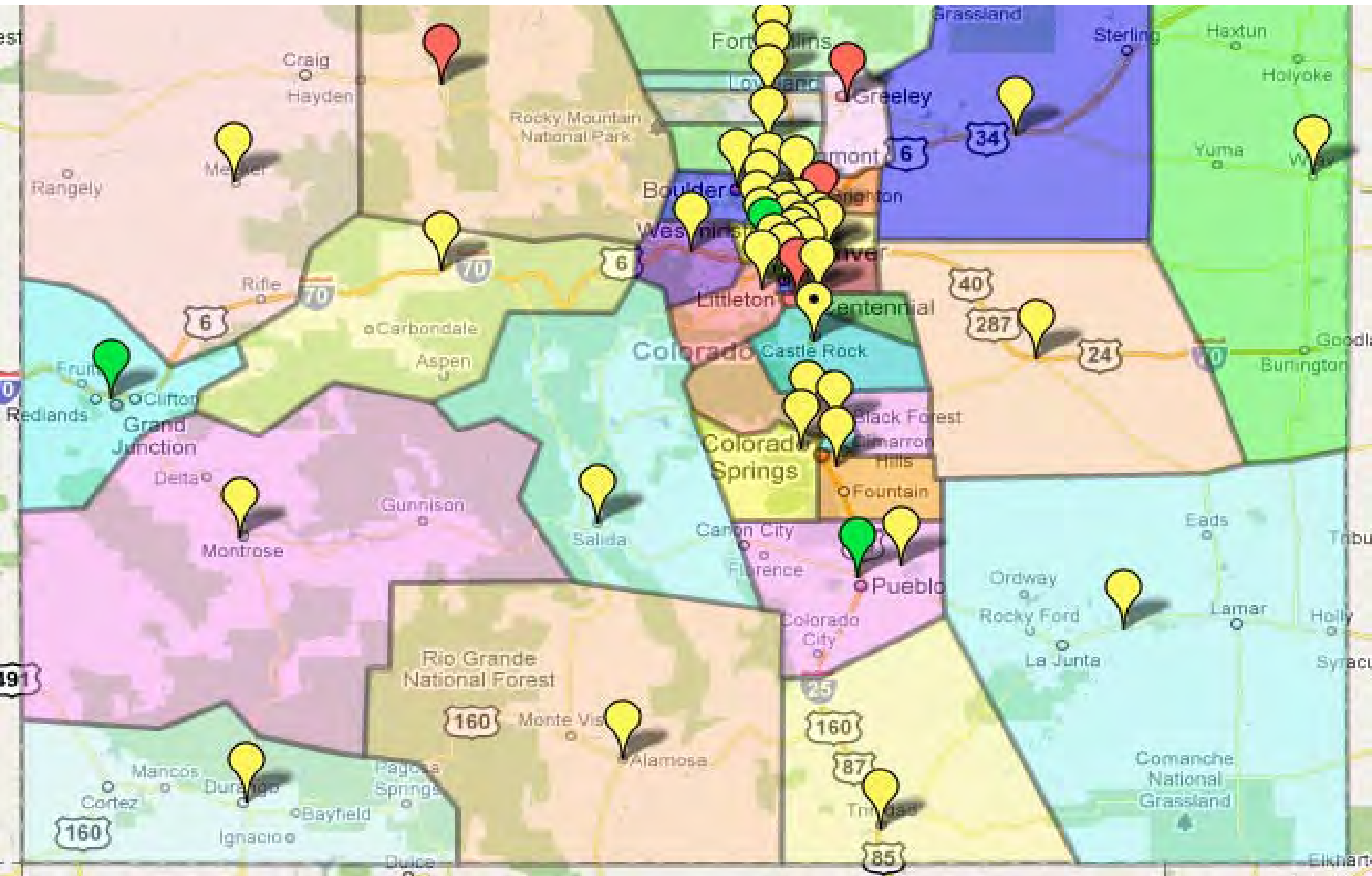
**Winter 2015**



Collectively, the elements of the process guides development of initiative measures on the CO ballot in 2016



# Targeting Civic Leaders in Communities across Colorado



**WHY these three  
issues?**

**WHAT is the  
problem?**



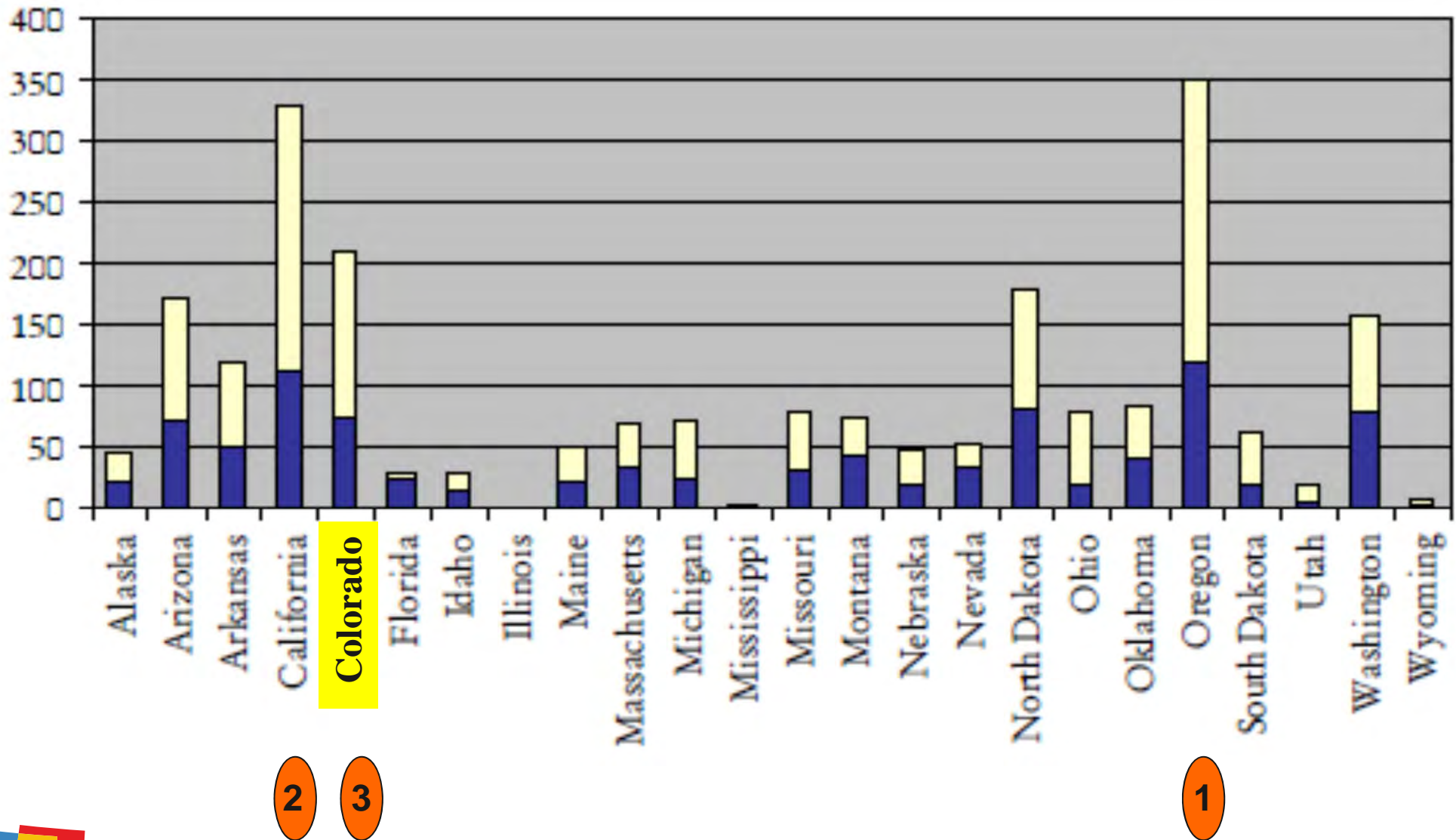
## What's the problem with our INITIATIVE PROCESS?

**Colorado has one of the most easily-amended state constitutions, and therefore we've seen more citizen initiatives than any state except CA and OR.**



# Number of Initiatives to Date by State

(Shaded areas of each bar denotes number of measures approved.)



2

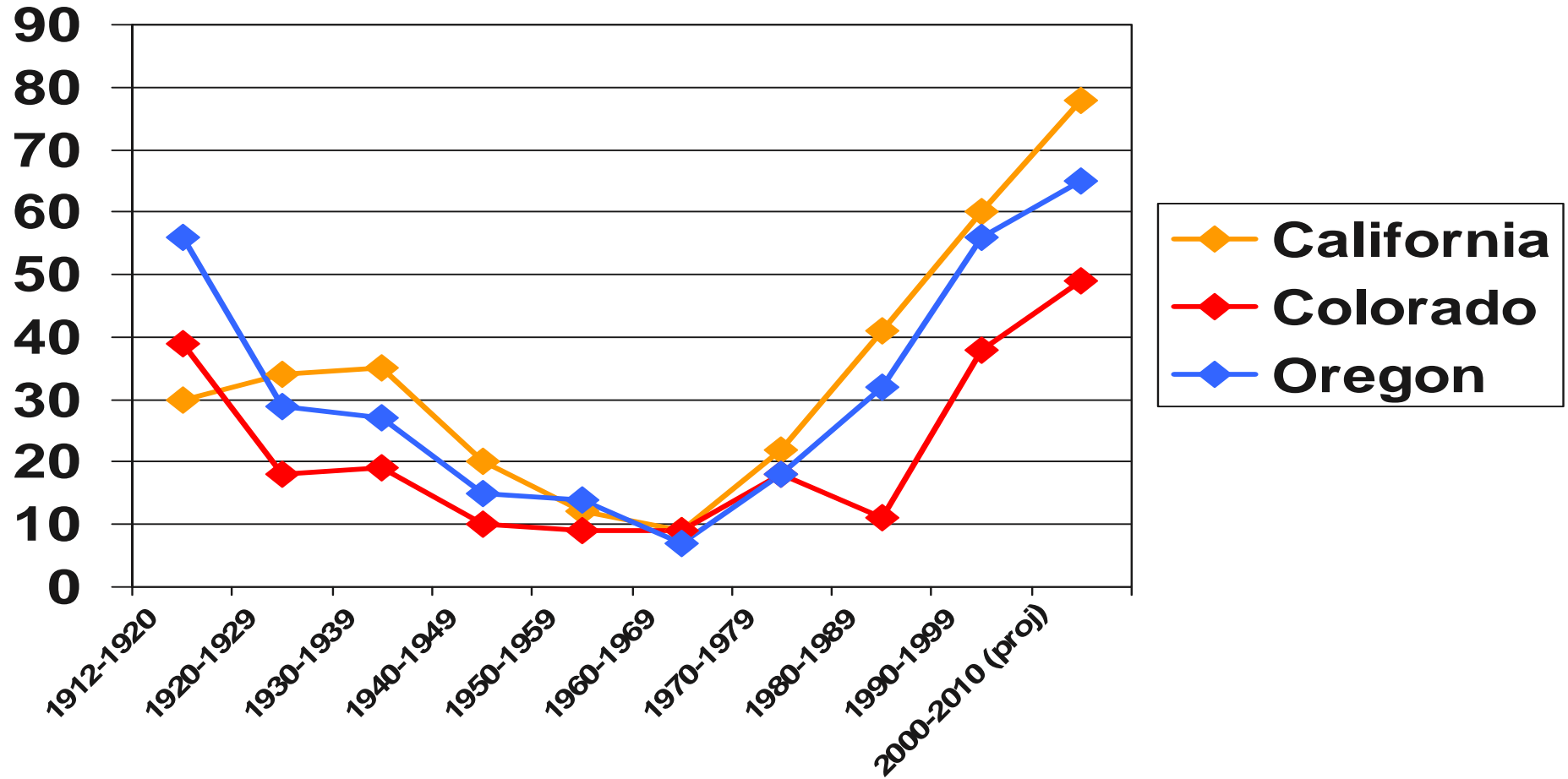
3

1



Source: Initiative & Referendum Institute

# State Initiative Trends



**NOTE: These are NOT cumulative values.**



# Easy Initiative Process = Cluttered Constitution

**Because it's just as easy for citizens to amend our state CONSTITUTION as it is to amend state LAWS, and**

**Because amendments to the constitution are much harder to change in the future than are amendments to state law (fixing problems in the constitution requires another vote of the people, whereas our elected legislature can fix problems in state law),**

**Initiative proponents (many of whom are out-of-state interests) are incentivized to pursue amendments to our CONSTITUTION rather than state LAWS, and this is creating an increasingly inflexible and conflicted framework for our state.**



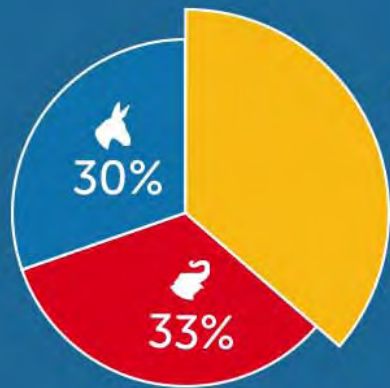
# What's the problem with our ELECTION PROCESS?

**More than One Million Colorado voters can't vote in our Primary Election unless they join a political party.**

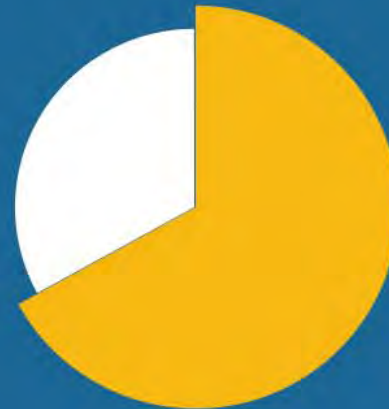
**Unaffiliated voters:**

**....are the LARGEST BLOCK of voters at 36% of the Colorado electorate.**

**.... are the FASTEST GROWING block of the Colorado electorate at 67% of new registrations.**



**37%**  
Of All  
Voters are  
Independent  
(2015)



**67%**  
Of New Voters  
are  
Independent  
(2014)

# Did you know...

## Participation in primary elections is declining.

Only 22% of registered voters participated in Colorado's primary election in 2014. This was down from only 31% who participated in 2010.

## Partisan influence is increasing.

The decreasing participation in our traditional Caucus/Assembly process results in increasing influence by the most partisan party members, which disadvantages more moderate candidates who may have broader appeal with the electorate.

## Colorado has no Presidential Primary.

Colorado no longer has a Presidential Primary in which all voters can participate, and which could contribute significantly to the state economy.





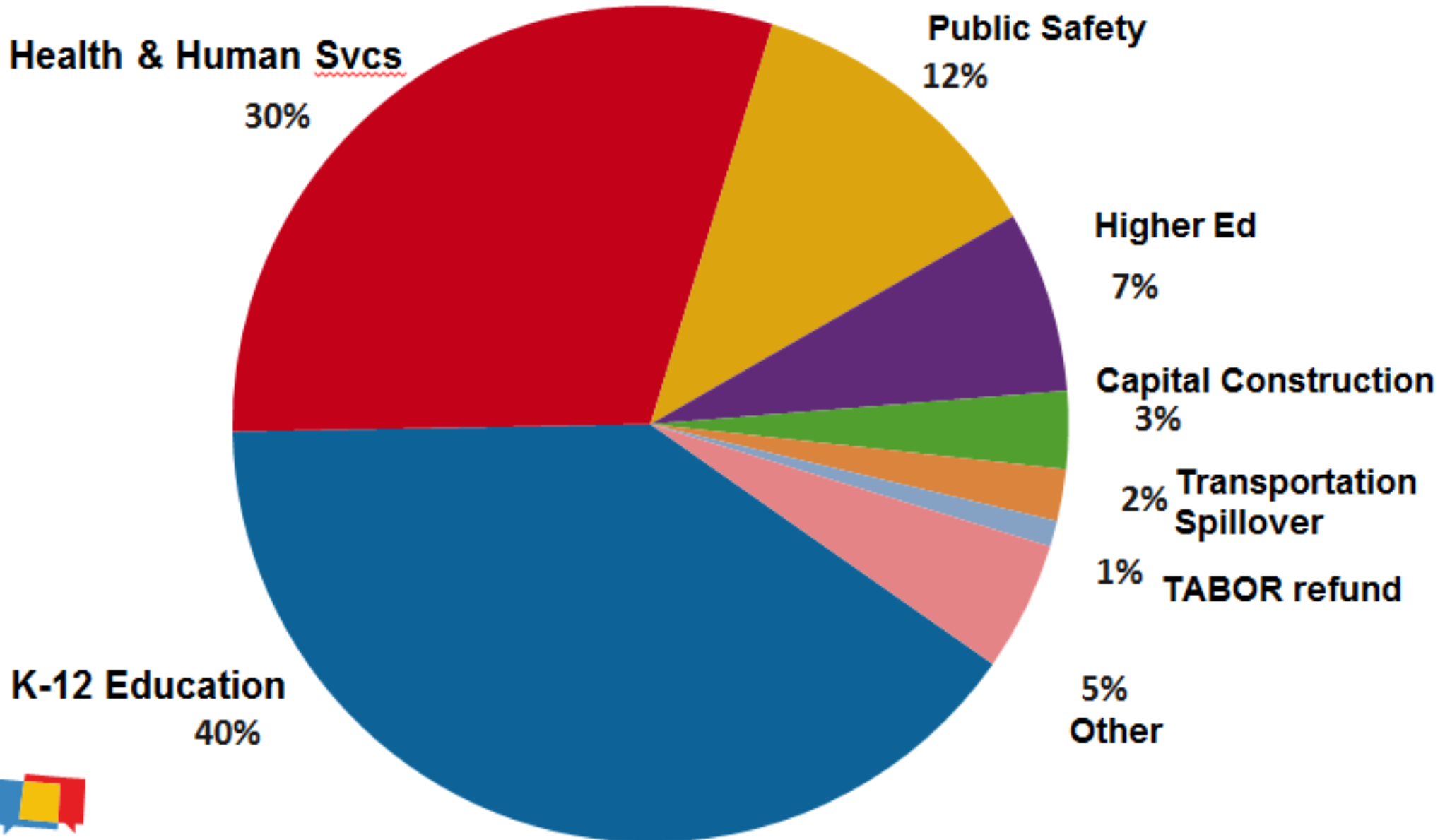
## What's the problem with our FISCAL POLICY?

**Colorado's fiscal policy is unsustainable because of a combination of constitutional spending mandates and revenue limitations, and health care costs related to our aging population.**



# Where Do We Spend Our Money?

TOTAL STATE BUDGET = \$11.3 billion



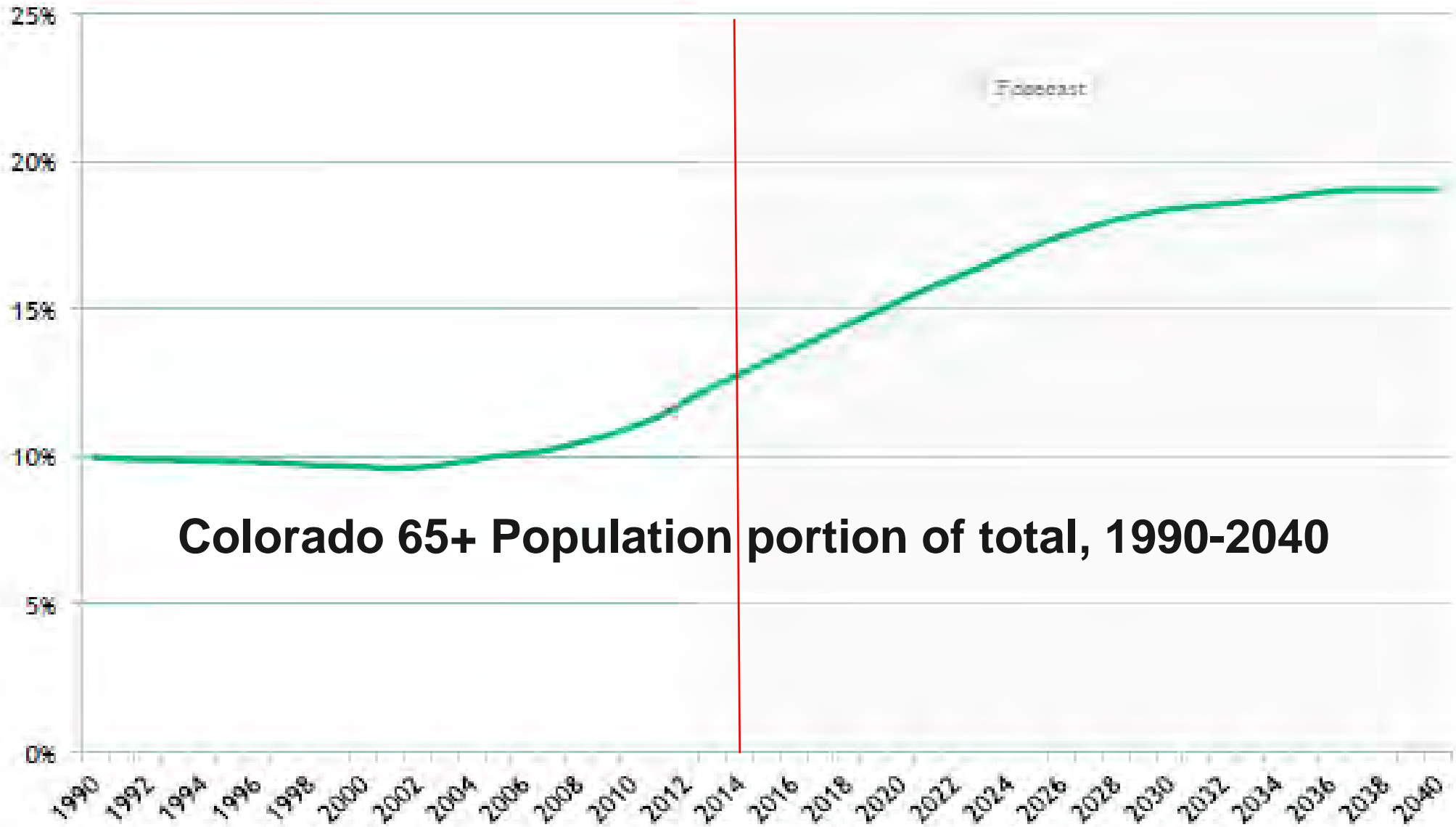
# **So, what's the problem?**

## **3 Reasons Why Our Fiscal Situation “Unsustainable”**

- 1. Demographics - “Baby Boomers” are now “Seniors”.**
- 2. The increasing costs of providing state services like health care for elderly and other vulnerable populations.**
- 3. Conflicting fiscal rules that we’ve embedded into our constitution.**



# “UNSUSTAINABLE” REASON #1: Demographics - “Baby Boomers” are now “Seniors”.

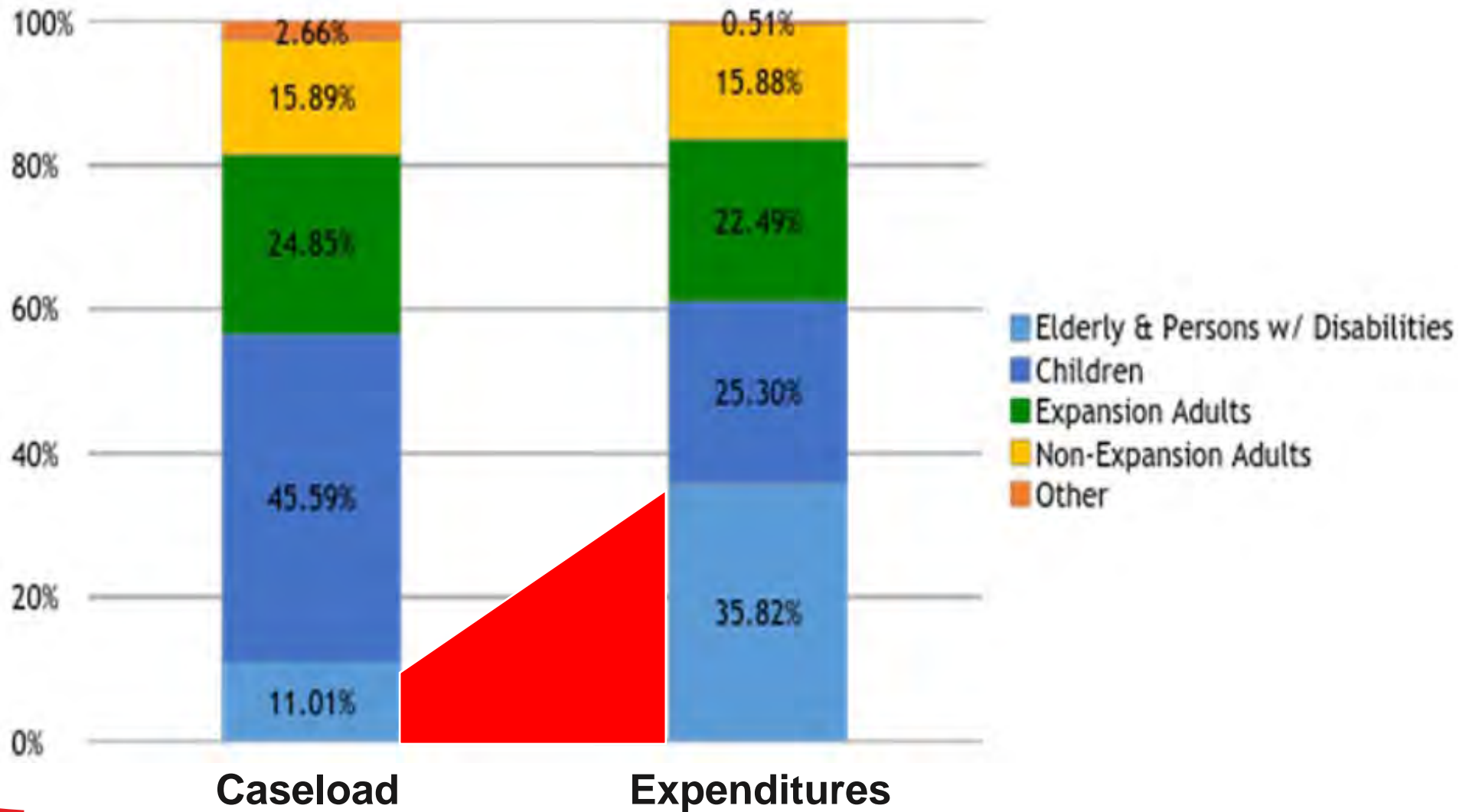


**Colorado 65+ Population portion of total, 1990-2040**

Source: Colorado State Demography Office

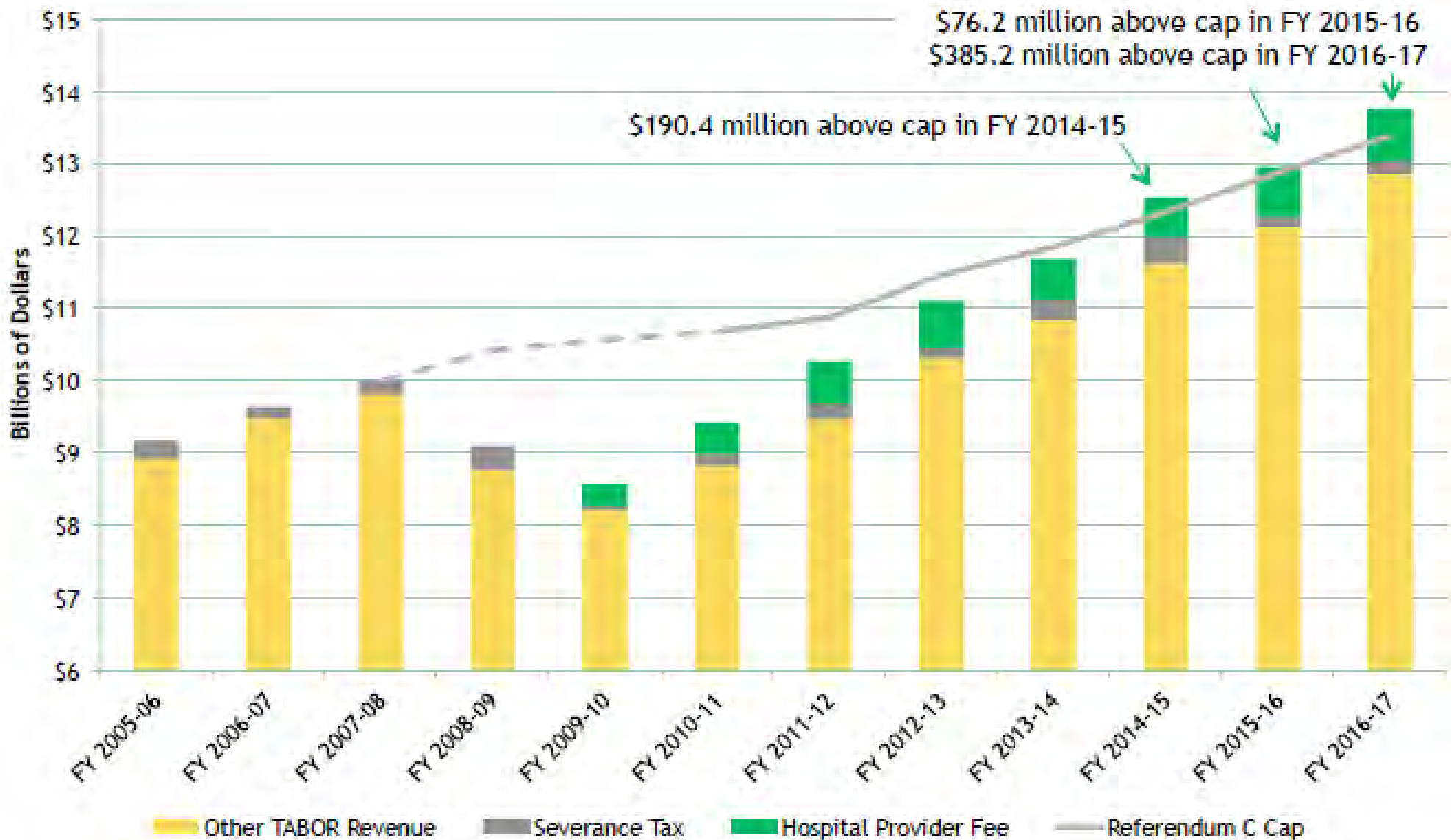


# “UNSUSTAINABLE” REASON #2: Medicaid Costs for Elderly & Disabled are Highest



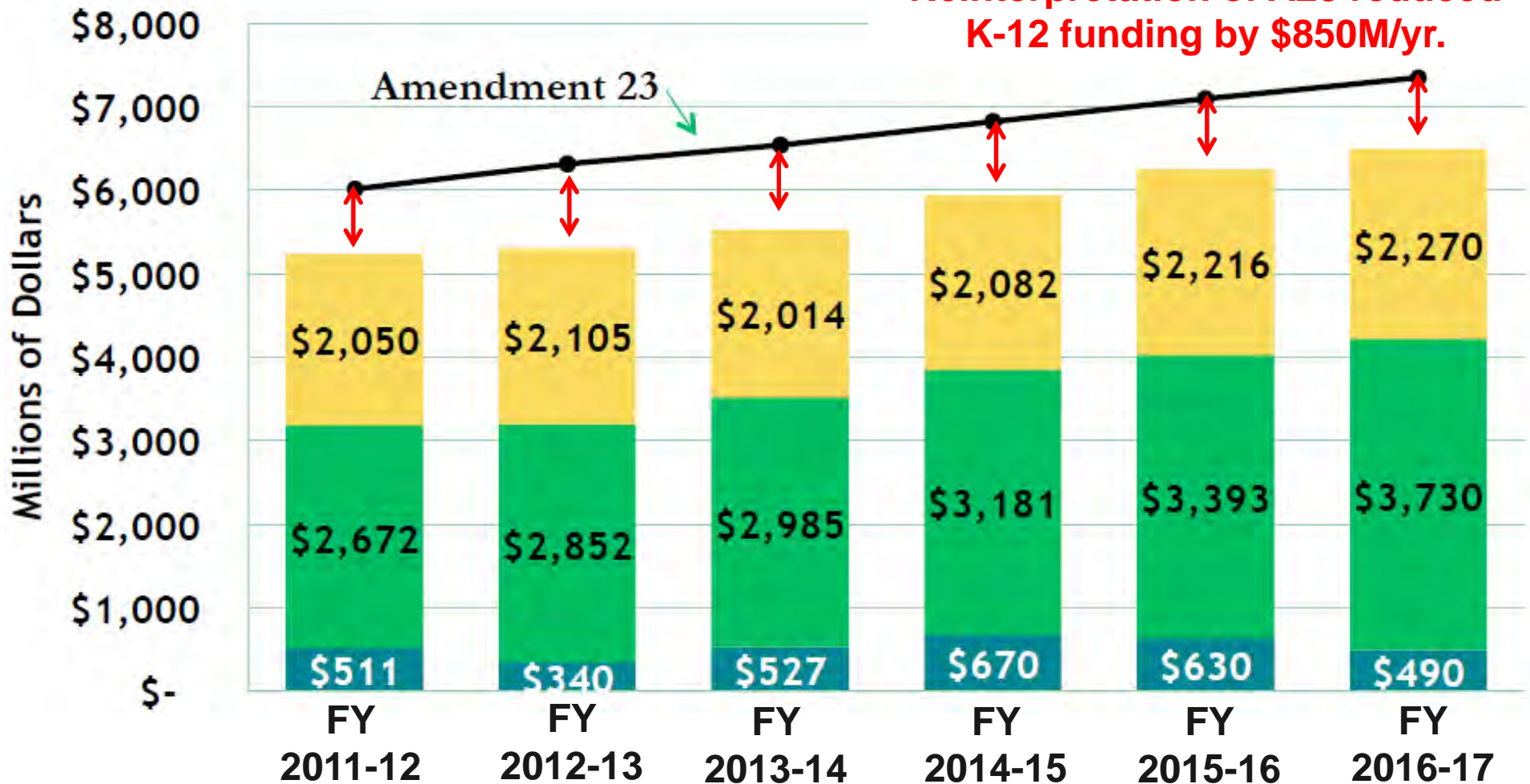
## “Unsustainable” Constitutional Fiscal Rule #1:

TABOR continually decreases state revenues relative to the size of the economy because the economy grows faster than the TABOR limit.



# “Unsustainable” Constitutional Fiscal Rule #2: Amendment 23 requires increased funding for K-12 education, even during economic downturns.

Reinterpretation of A23 reduced K-12 funding by \$850M/yr.



Local Property Taxes & State Lands

State General Fund

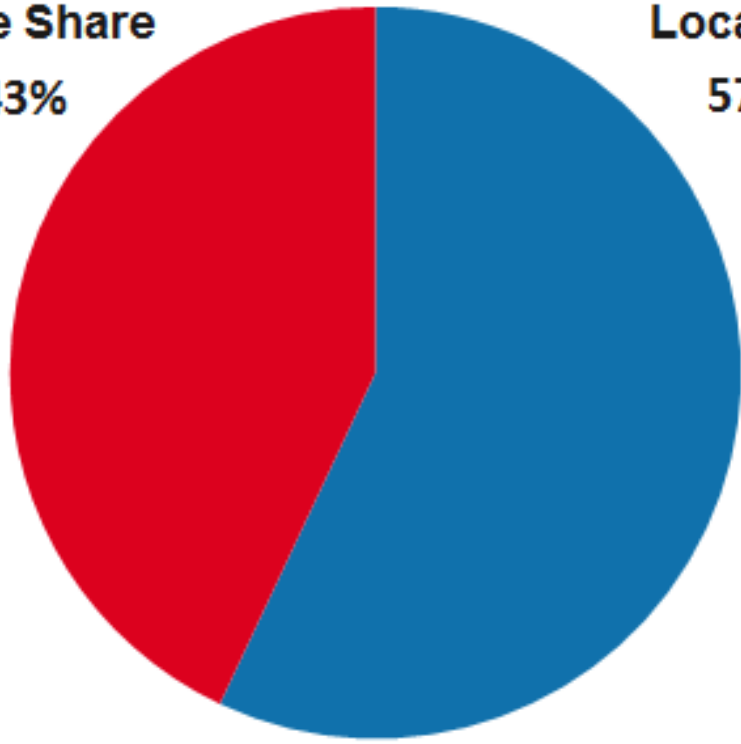
State Education Fund

## “Unsustainable” Constitutional Fiscal Rule #3:

The Gallagher Amendment has resulted in continually shifting the K-12 funding cost from local to state government, which causes the K-12 “slice” of the state budget to grow every year.

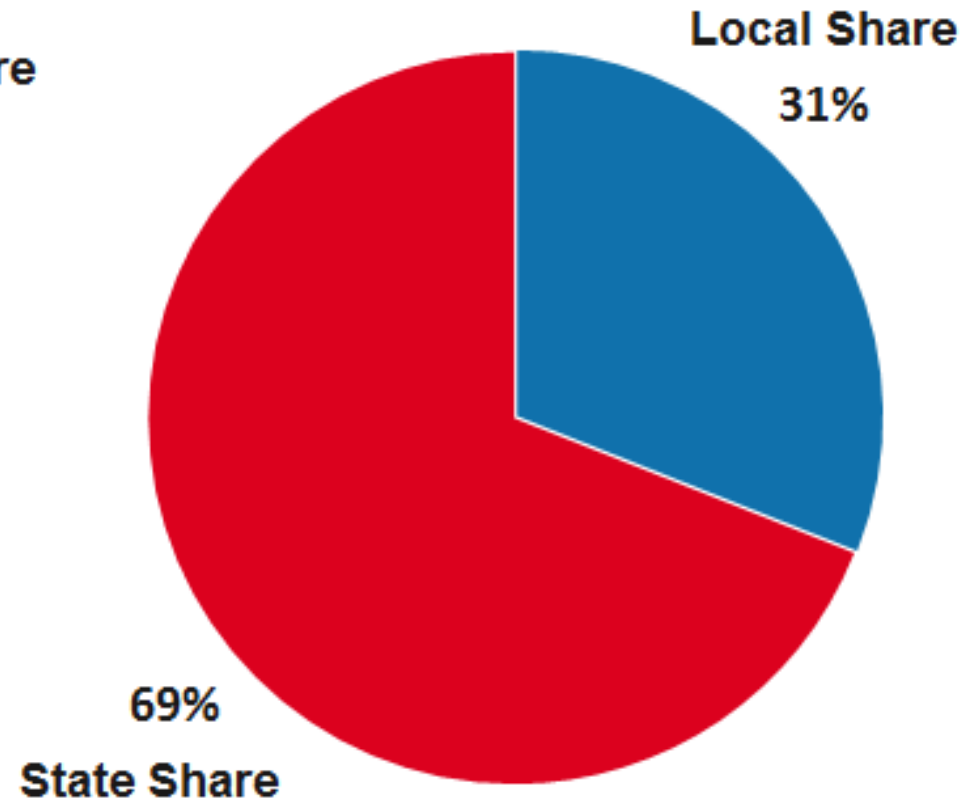
**1989**

State Share  
43%



Local Share  
57%

**2015**





# Findings from the Legislative-Commissioned DU Study on Colorado's Economic Future, 2011-2024

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## Annual expected growth rates:

- K-12 education expenditures = 6%
- Medicaid expenditures = 8%
- General Fund revenues = 5%

## BOTTOM LINE:

*“Even a strong recovery and sustained job growth over the next decade and a half will not produce enough income and sales tax revenue to afford Colorado’s share of Medicaid funding and the state’s payment for public schools under current constitutional and statutory provisions.”*

*“By fiscal year 2024 a structural imbalance in the state budget would result in only enough revenue to support Medicaid, K-12 education, and corrections. “*

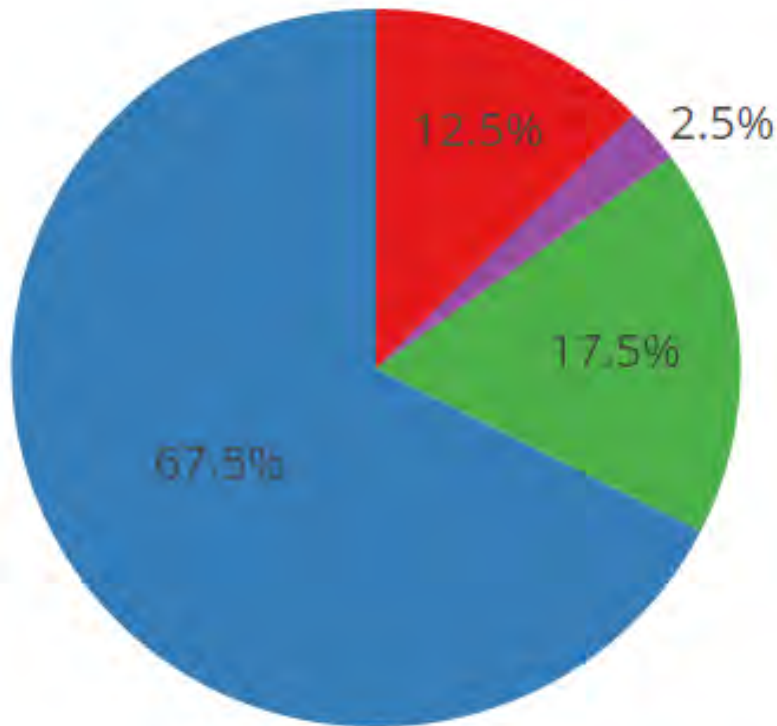


**We believe Colorado  
can do better.**



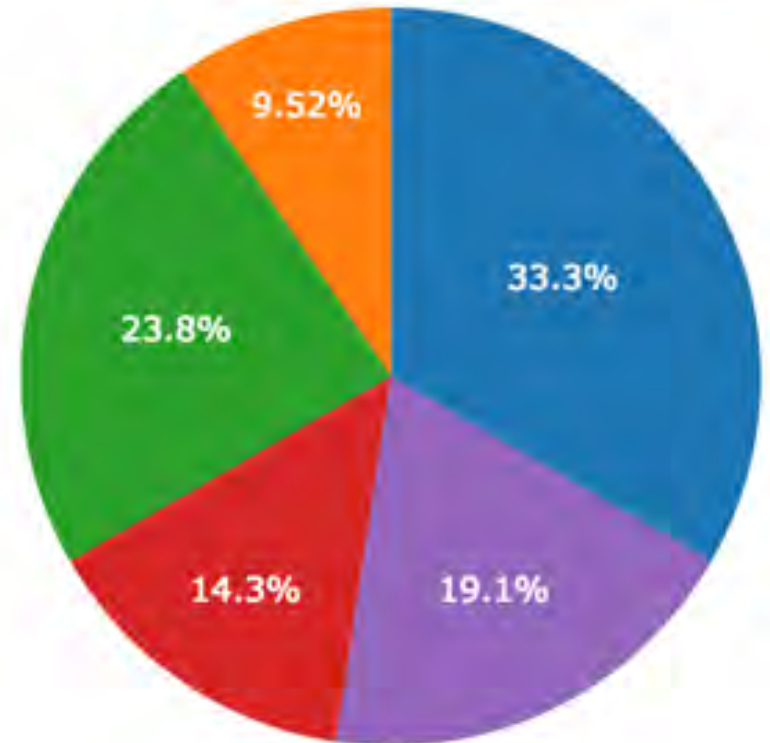
# Grand Junction, 9/22/15

## Political Affiliation



- Democrat
- Republican
- Unaffiliated
- Other

## Occupation

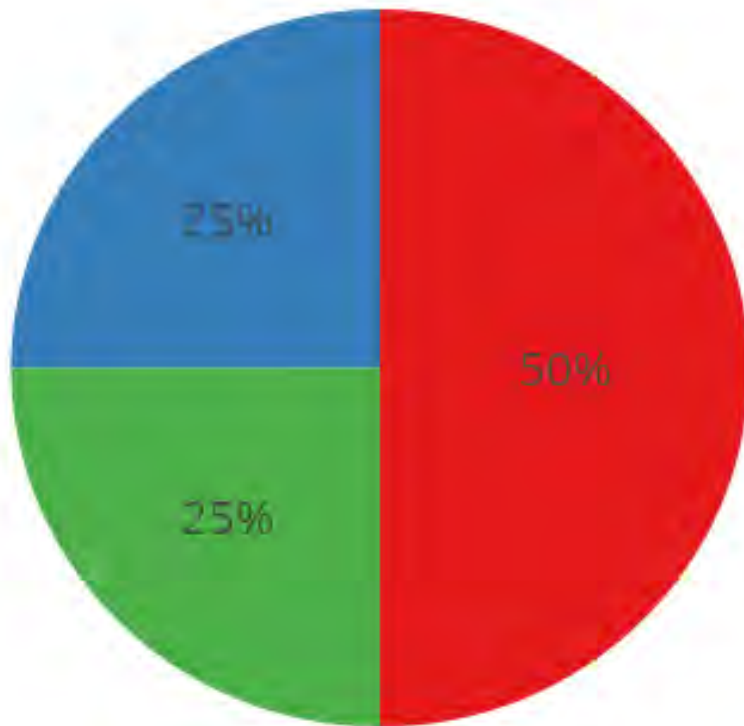


- Business
- Education
- Government
- Non-Profit
- Retired
- Student



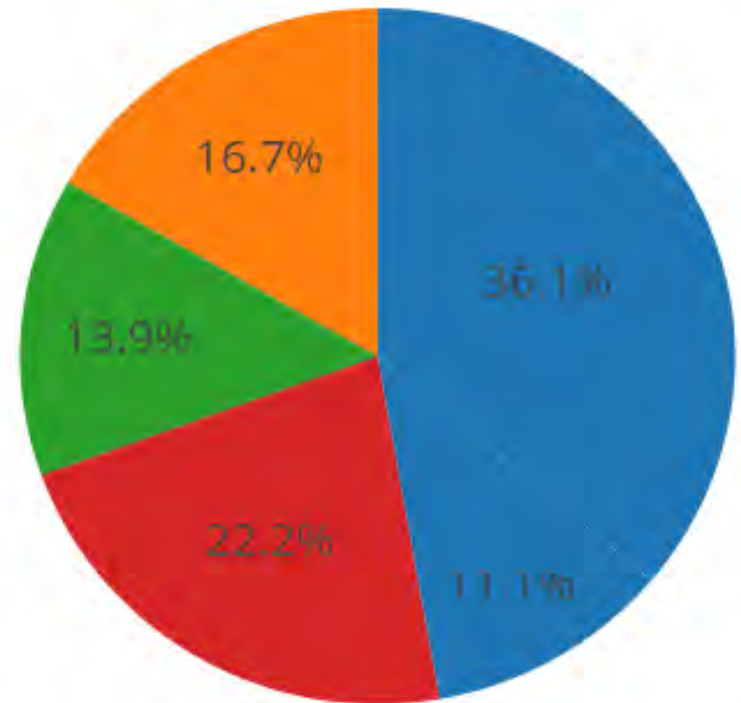
# Durango, 9/21/15

## Political Affiliation



- Democrat
- Republican
- Unaffiliated
- Other

## Occupation

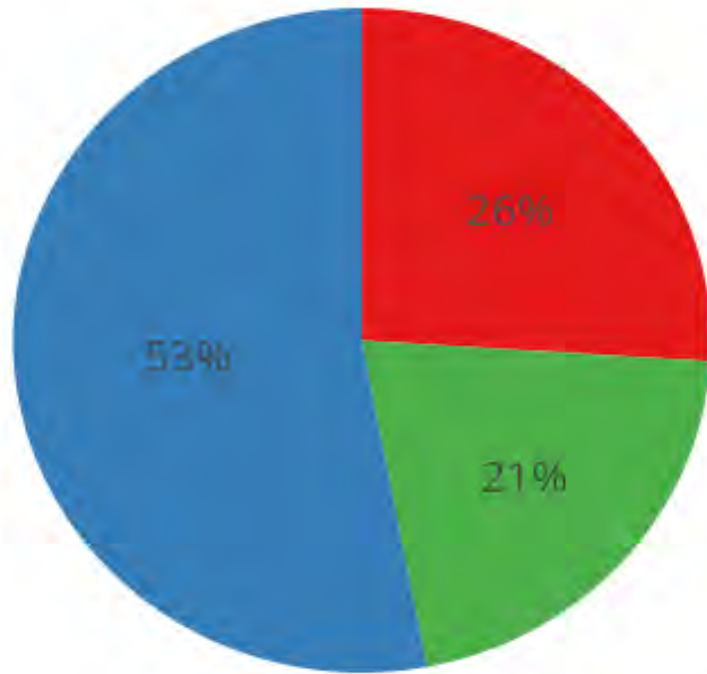


- Business
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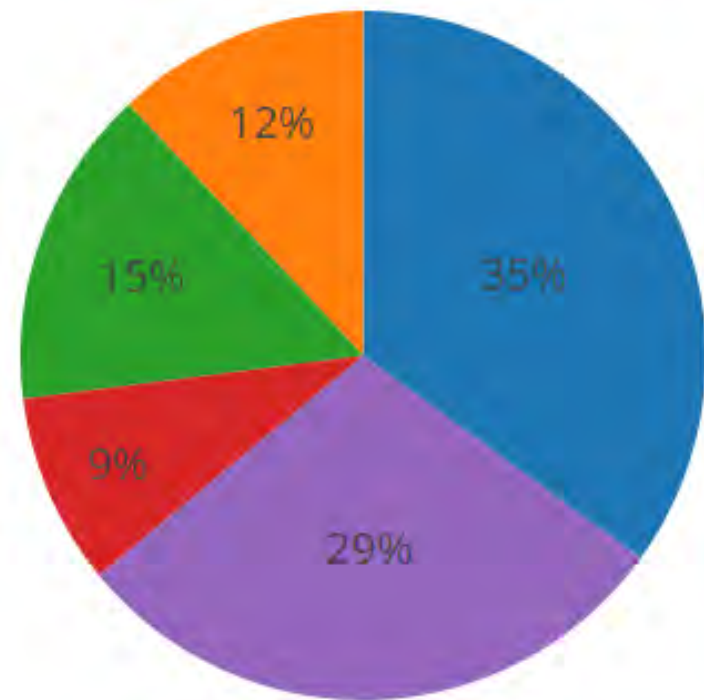
# Greeley, 10/28/15

## Political Affiliation



- Democrat
- Republican
- Unaffiliated
- Other

## Occupation

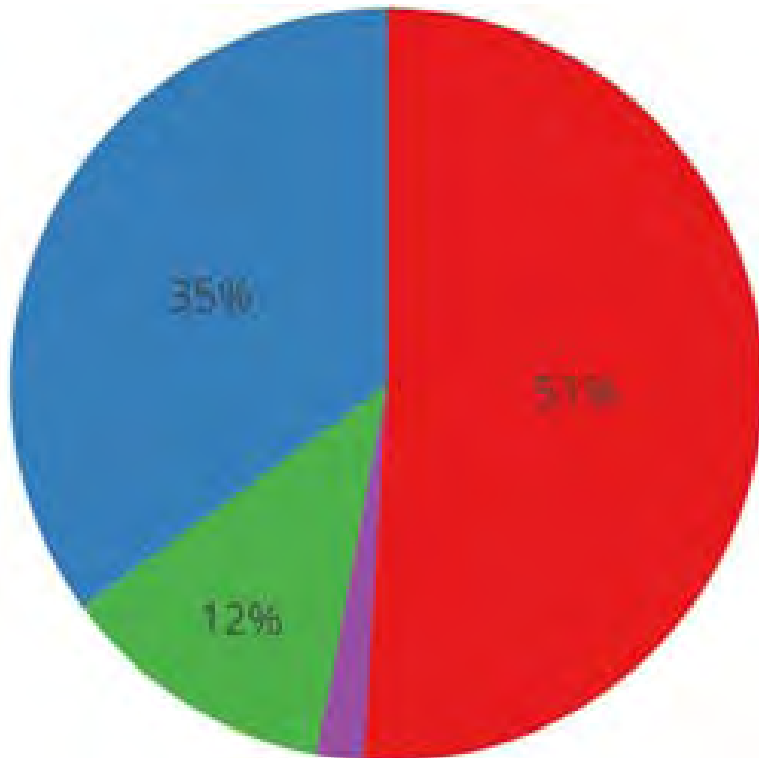


- Business
- Education
- Government
- Non-Profit
- Retired
- Student



# Aurora, 9/22/15

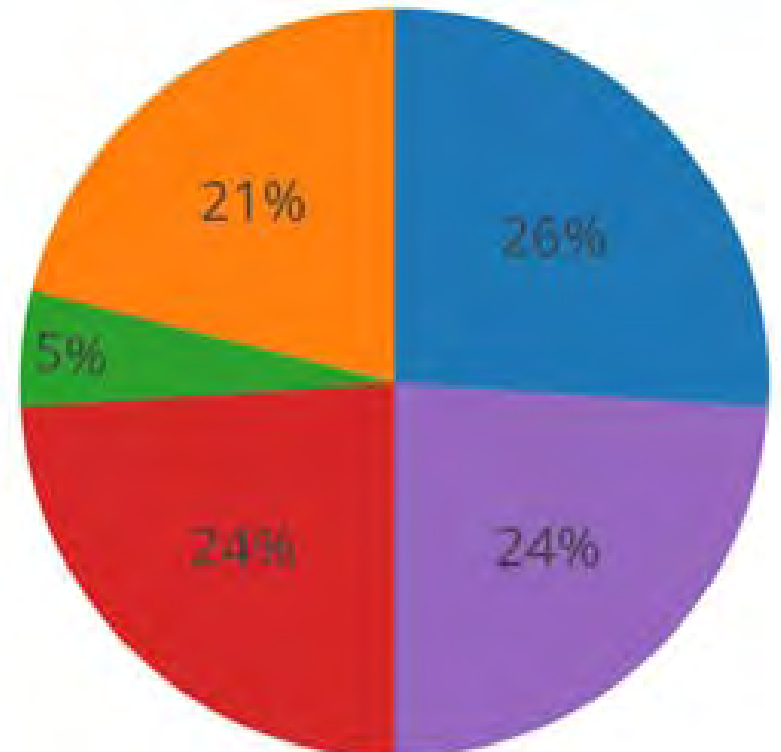
## Political Affiliation



2%

- Democrat
- Republican
- Unaffiliated
- Other

## Occupation



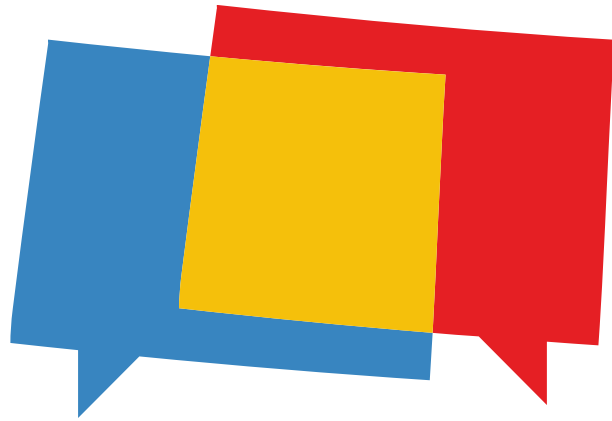
- Business
- Education
- Government
- Non-Profit
- Retired
- Student



## Consensus Amongst Grasstops Leaders

	Grand Junction	Durango	Greeley	Aurora
Require proposed amendments to the constitutional to gather more signatures	97	100		95
Require proposed amendments to the constitutional to gather signatures from different geographic areas	85	100		77
Require a super-majority vote to pass future amendments to the constitution (while allowing existing language to be amended out by the same simple-majority by which it got in)	90	83	94	85
Allow State to retain revenue that would otherwise be refunded	82	82	97	75
Change TABOR revenue limit to be a % of the economy	66	63	91	93





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**Colorado**

**Thanks for your time!**

**Visit us online at [www.betterco.org](http://www.betterco.org)!**

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