

Colorado's FUTURE

BUILDING A BETTER COLORADO THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**Statewide Summary
(updated as of 4/15/10)**

A Model for Civic Engagement

"Building a Better Colorado through Civic Engagement" is a model which Colorado's Future has tested over the last year to identify and engage civic leaders within their communities in an interactive discussion of public policy challenges with the goal of developing non-partisan solutions for the long-term betterment of our state. Beginning in March of 2009, and with the support of the Colorado Health Foundation and the Institute On the Common Good at Regis University, Colorado's Future tested this Civic Engagement model in several diverse communities across the state.

The Civic Engagement model employed a 4-step process to identify civic leaders within each community to invite to participate in the Civic Engagement Meeting. The identified civic leaders were selected by their peers based on their demonstrated commitment to the community and their recognized demonstration of the following characteristics:

- Being trusted and respected in the community.
- Demonstrating a commitment to working with others to solve problems.
- Demonstrating a commitment to giving back to their community.
- Being well-known in the community.
- Demonstrating a willingness to roll up their sleeves and make positive change happen within the community.
- Collectively, the group represented much of the diversity of the community in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and profession.

Through these Civic Engagement meetings, over 1000 key civic leaders were assembled to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to identify and engage a diverse group of civic leaders in an interactive dialogue about a complex public policy challenge?
- Will those civic leaders be able to agree on the nature of the problem AND be able to achieve significant agreement on a meaningful solution?
- Will the solution crafted by civic leaders within one community look the same as the solution crafted by civic leaders in other communities?
- Will those civic leaders be concerned enough about the problem and enthused enough about their solution to commit personal effort to securing the necessary support from the broader voting electorate?

During the three hour event, participants engaged in small group discussions and contributed to the large group discussion with the aid of electronic keypad polling devices. The agenda consisted of three main parts: 1) Review of the arguments both FOR and AGAINST ballot and constitutional reform 2) Review, discussion, creation, and voting on over 40 options for improving our initiative and constitutional processes; and 3) Discussion of a strategy for securing passage of any consensus recommendation.

The Issue: Ballot Reform and Constitutional Review

These Civic Engagement meetings were convened around the issue of ballot reform and constitutional review. Over the past 25 years, Colorado has experienced a surge in the number of initiated ballot measures. In the last 17 years, the constitution has been amended 35 times, adding detailed and sometimes conflicting budget provisions with far-reaching unintended consequences. While most Coloradans support citizen initiatives, the lenient process and the ease at which the constitution may be amended has made some ask whether it is time to 1) change the process by which citizens may initiate ballot measures; and 2) update the state constitution in order to mitigate the excessive detail that has resulted in a number of confusing conflicts.

Unprecedented Results

Despite the diversity of the assembled community groups which represented a broad array of professional disciplines, civic interests, and political viewpoints, there was a shared sense that, while it is important for Colorado to retain its citizen initiative process, the ballot process should be reformed to make it more difficult to amend the state's constitution. Through interactive

3-hour discussions, the three groups of civic leaders considered over 40 different options concerning the citizen initiative process and the process of constitutional review.

The participants were given complete control over the direction of the discussion, based on their opinion of the issue of ballot reform and the options which they most supported for addressing that issue. Participants were also invited to suggest their own options for consideration, and these were presented to the broader group to be voted on. While the basic presentation of options was the same, there were adjustments and additions made to that presentation to reflect the lessons learned from each preceding Civic Engagement Meeting.

In the end, the participants were able to develop a strong agreement on a series of meaningful reforms to improve the ballot process.

The following recommendations secured at least 75% support at the Civic Engagement Meetings:

- 1. Ballot language should be clear and concise (readable at an 8th grade level).**
- 2. Make the financial disclosure requirements for ballot initiative campaigns just as strict as the requirements for candidate campaigns.**
- 3. Require petitioners to collect signatures from various locations around the state.**
- 4. Require more signatures for constitutional amendments than statutory amendments.**
- 5. Require that constitutional amendments secure a super-majority of votes while continuing to allow statutory amendments to be adopted with a simple majority, but allow anything that's ALREADY in the constitution to be amended OUT with a simple majority vote.**
- 6. Establish a Constitutional Review Commission that meets periodically to review the constitution and recommend to voters changes to correct conflicting provisions.**

After identifying these shared recommendations, the assembled groups of civic leaders were asked whether or not they would personally support this group of consensus recommendations if the ideas were presented as one measure at the ballot box. Over 90% of the participants indicated that they WOULD vote in support of these recommendations.

A Strategy for Implementation

Colorado's Future recognizes that securing agreement on a recommendation for ballot reform is only HALF the solution; the other half of the solution involves securing support of the voters at the ballot box to implement the recommendation. We

believe that the answer to securing such support lies not in trying to “educate” voters about these complex issues using 30-second sound bites, but rather by having people whom they know and trust within their own community make an appeal to them for support.

The “Building a Better Colorado” model proposes to leverage the credibility of the civic leaders within their own communities to secure this support amongst the broader voting public through an individual outreach effort coupled with a broader community-based message from those same civic leaders. As part of this strategy, participating civic leaders were asked how many people they would personally be willing to ask to vote for this recommendation if it appeared on the ballot. On average, each participant indicated a willingness to ask 13 others within their circle of influence to vote in support of these ideas.

We believe that by being very deliberate in identifying the civic leaders within each community, and then engaging those civic leaders in a constructive dialogue which is motivated by a shared desire to build a better statewide community (rather than political agendas or organizational ideologies), and giving them control of determining both the problem and the solution, we can develop an environment for building collaborative solutions. Further, we believe that, through this engaging process, civic leaders will be collectively concerned about the problem (which they agreed to) and enthused enough about the solution (which they created), to do what is necessary to secure broader support within their own communities to implement these solutions.

Next Steps

Based on the success of these Civic Engagement meetings, Colorado’s Future will request the Colorado General Assembly to pass legislation to forward these citizen recommendations to the ballot to be voted on in the fall of 2010.

The results from all meetings will be available at www.coloradosfuture.org. Colorado’s Future will maintain contact with all of the civic leaders who have participated in this process to keep them apprised of the progress of this project. Participating civic leaders are encouraged to sign up on the website and observe the progress of the other communities, and utilize the website’s networking capability to identify their own individual contacts for additional outreach.

The summary results of the three beta test Civic Engagement Meetings are pasted below.

(Prepared by Reeves Brown, 970-242-3264)

SUMMARY TABULATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby ¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder ²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
<i>(All figures are in percentages unless indicated otherwise.)</i>	3/19/09	5/26/09	11/5/09	12/1/09	12/15/09	12/16/09	3/31/10	4/1/10	4/6-8/10	4/8/10	4/13/10	4/15/10	
<i>(Areas where at least 75% agreement was achieved are indicated in GREEN within the "Average" column on the right.)</i>													
<u>Participant Demographics</u>													
Attendance (#)	164	131	107	130	50	129	128	79	100	27	41	70	96 / 1156
How long have you lived in the community? (years)	24	22	25	25	n/a ₁	18	21	19	22	23	28	13	22
What is your age range? (#)	54	56	56	56	46	53	51	57	53	52	49	55	53
What is your political affiliation?													
• Republican	55	39	38	44	37	46	55	11	19	42	46	61	41
• Democrat	31	44	44	38	33	46	29	70	73	46	31	16	42
• Unaffiliated	12	18	17	17	29	31	14	15	8	12	23	20	18
What is your organizational affiliation?	n/a ₃												
• Agriculture		0	4	8	0	8	0	0	3	0	11	0	3
• Business		37	39	29	41	38	48	21	24	25	16	56	34
• Healthcare		12	11	5	0	5	8	0	10	4	5	4	6
• Education		9	13	16	0	9	9	0	12	25	18	16	12
• Government		12	16	17	25	13	8	0	11	29	26	11	15
• Non-Profit		23	13	19	14	22	27	28	21	13	18	7	19

¹ The Granby data was corrupted due to a computer error; the results reflect the notes taken by staff.

² The Boulder data was corrupted due to a computer error; the results reflect the notes taken by staff.

³ We did not ask the Grand Junction participants about their "organizational affiliation".

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby ¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder ²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
• Other		6	6	7	14	5	1	0	13	4	5	6	6
Identification of the Problem													
There is a problem with the current ballot process.	88	91	84	76	79	80	73	80	80	88	68	68	80
We should retain, but amend, the citizen initiative process in Colorado.	73	75	88	84	86	87	82	88	78	71	73	87	81
Additional Review of Proposed Initiatives													
We should extend the initiative timeframe to allow time for the legislature to host public hearings on proposed initiatives so that the public and the initiative proponents could hear arguments both FOR and AGAINST the proposed initiatives?	65	76	50	74	n/a ₁	57	64	51	74	78	56	64	64
Signature Gathering Requirements for Initiatives													
The number of signatures required to place an initiative on the ballot should be INCREASED.	91	92	85	90	92	86	89	78	68	100	56	92	85
There should be more signatures required for constitutional amendments than statutory amendments.	n/a ₄	n/a ₅	83	85	71	88	79	85	86	88	83	68	82
REQUIRE that some signatures be gathered from different locations, AND we should LIMIT how many can come from any one area.	67	57	71	67	80	76	n/a ⁶						70
There should be a limit on how many signatures can come from any one area.	n/a ₅						50 ⁶	86	56	88	80	71	72

⁴ In Grand Junction, we asked if we should INCREASE the number of signatures for constitutional initiatives while at the same time REDUCING the number of signatures for statutory initiatives. While 61% supported this approach, there MAY have been more support if we had simply asked if we should require more signatures for constitutional amendments than statutory amendments.

⁵ In Lakewood, we forced the respondents to CHOOSE between “increasing” the number of signatures (60% support) and “INCREASING the number of signatures for constitutional initiatives and DECREASING the number for statutory initiatives (32% support). There MAY have been more support if we had simply asked if we should require more signatures for constitutional amendments than statutory amendments.

⁶ Prior to Colorado Springs, we packaged the question of limiting the number of sigs with the question of geographic distribution; in Colorado Springs and thereafter, we began to break out the question of limiting the % of signatures coming from any one area.

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
We should require petitioners to collect signatures from various locations around the state.	91	90	93	94	94	98	79	78	82	100	98	76	89
Require that initiative signatures be gathered from ALL political districts across the state.		80	79	64	76	79	67	63	75	58	70	71	71
Require that some signatures be gathered in either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALL 7 Congressional Districts, or • ALL 35 State Senate Districts. 	66 ⁷	⁸ 80 51	⁹ 36 43	38 26	26 50	34 45	36 31	34 29	41 34	35 23	32 38	53 18	43 35
<u>Statutory vs. Constitutional Measures</u>													
We should encourage initiative proponents to pursue STATUTORY measures rather than CONSTITUTIONAL measures.	89	88	86	83	90	90	81	82	80	92	90	72	85
Prohibit the legislature from amending approved statutory initiatives for a period of time without 2/3rds support.	62	55	67	66	53	57	53	46	52	58	64	48	57
How long should the legislature be prohibited from amending statutory initiatives without 2/3 support? (1, 3, 5 or more yrs)	n/a ¹⁰	n/a ⁷	3	3	3	3	2	3	n/a ¹¹				3
Require that any constitutional amendment must be passed in two consecutive elections.	14	30	10	22	n/a ¹	37	23	34	25	16	15	5	21
Require that constitutional amendments secure a super-majority of votes while continuing to allow statutory amendments to be adopted with a simple majority.	91	80	84	79	85	83	90	79	84	92	86	89	85
DEFINE "super-majority" as 2/3rds rather than 60%.	n/a ¹²	n/a ⁶	82	79	87	73	73	62	67	63	73	68	73

⁷ In Grand Junction, we didn't allow participants to choose between requiring signatures to be gathered in "ALL" or "A MAJORITY" of either the Congressional Districts or State Senate Districts. While 66% supported requiring signatures to be gathered from "all or a majority" of State Senate Districts, that support would likely have been higher if we'd limited the scope of this option to ALL Districts.

⁸ In Lakewood, we allowed participants to indicate their support for each geographic option rather than forcing them to CHOOSE between the various options. There was 80% support for requiring signatures in ALL 7 Congressional Districts, and 51% support for requiring signatures in ALL 35 State Senate Districts.

⁹ In Pueblo, and in each meeting thereafter, we asked participants to select BETWEEN the options of: A) a MAJORITY of the 7 Cong Districts, B) ALL of the 7 Cong Districts, C) a MAJORITY of the 35 State Senate Districts, or D) ALL of the 35 State Senate Districts.

¹⁰ We did not ask the participants in Grand Jct and Lakewood how long the legislature should be prohibited from amending a citizen-initiated statutory amendment.

¹¹ We did not ask the NE & SE Denver groups how long the legislature should be restricted from tampering with citizen-initiated statutes.

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby ¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder ²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
Allow anything that's ALREADY in the constitution to be amended OUT with a simple majority vote.	78	75	68	64	n/a ₁	75	73	79	69	71	63	62	71
<u>Voter Education</u>													
Make the financial disclosure requirements for ballot initiative campaigns just as strict as the requirements for candidate campaigns.	99	98	91	94	98	99	94	94	97	96	93	86	95
Ballot language should be clear and concise (readable at an 8th grade level).	90	97	89	82	91	89	80	88	75	100	n/a ¹³	100	89
<u>Repeated Ballot Measures</u>													
If an initiative measure is rejected by voters, then an identical or substantially similar measure should be prohibited from appearing on the ballot for a period of time.	59	74	53	41	41	56	60	44	52	52	51	41	52
<u>Constitutional Review & Overhaul</u>													

¹² We did not ask participants in the Grand Junction and Lakewood to define “super-majority”.

¹³ We didn’t ask the Eastern Plains participants about “clearer ballot language”.

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby ¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder ²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
Establish a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) that meets periodically to review a limited scope of the constitution and recommend to voters changes to correct conflicting provisions.	91	85	84	75	82	89	83	80	83	92	62	70	81
How often should the Constitutional Review Commission meet?	n/a ¹⁴	n/a ⁹	6	7	5	5	7	n/a ²	6	7	8		6
The scope of the CRC should be limited.			53	54	42	36	37	76	59	54	79	39	53
The members of the CRC should be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appointed by elected leaders, or elected within communities, or a combination of both. 			27 73 n/a ¹⁵	13 39 28	n/a ¹ n/a ¹ 55	11 28 61	10 24 54	n/a ²	10 22 59	7 15 48	14 23 57	11 34 41	13 32 50
Require political balance among the members, regardless of whether they are appointed or elected.			81	82	77	75	82	n/a ²	79	68	50	78	75
Recommendations of the CRC should be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> placed directly on the ballot, treated as citizens initiatives with required sigs and vote, referred to the legislature to approve or not for the ballot. 	n/a ¹⁶	n/a ¹¹	n/a ¹¹	n/a ¹¹	48 8 44	47 25 39	40 18 41	n/a ²	47 25 28	38 19 43		27 40 23	41 23 36
Convene a Constitutional Convention to overhaul all or part of the constitution.	26	45	27	35	48	60	35	n/a ²	45	40	39	22	38
Amend the constitution to allow a Constitutional Convention to be limited in scope or by topic.							38 ¹⁷	n/a ²	66	61	44	26	47
Civic Leader Recommendation													

¹⁴ We did not ask the Grand Junction and Lakewood participants any additional questions regarding the details of a Constitutional Review Commission.

¹⁵ We did not ask the Pueblo participants if the CRC should be a COMBINATION of both appointed and elected members.

¹⁶ We did not ask the participants in the GJ, Lakewood, Pueblo or Greeley meetings how the CRC recommendations should be handled.

¹⁷ In Colorado Springs, we began to ask participants about their views on amending the constitution to allow for a Constitutional Convention to be limited in scope.

COMMUNITY	Grand Junction	Lakewood	Pueblo	Greeley	Granby¹	Steamboat Springs	Colorado Springs	Boulder²	Denver	Adams County	NE Plains	Highlands Ranch	Average / Total
Would you support a ballot measure which encompassed the strongest points of agreement from this meeting?	93	89	91	82	95	95	92	87	93	96	92	97	92
Statewide Summary Recommendation													
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require that constitutional amendments secure a super-majority of votes while continuing to allow statutory amendments to be adopted with a simple majority, but allow anything that's ALREADY in the constitution to be amended OUT with a simple majority vote. Establish a Constitutional Review Commission that meets periodically to review the constitution and recommend to voters changes to correct conflicting provisions. Make the financial disclosure requirements for ballot initiative campaigns just as strict as the requirements for candidate campaigns. Ballot language should be clear and concise (readable at an 8th grade level). Require petitioners to collect signatures from various locations around the state. 	93	97	95	83	95	98	n/a ¹⁸						
How many people would you personally be willing to ask to support this recommendation? (#)	13	13	14	11	14	13	12	14	15	12	15	11	13

¹⁸ Beginning in Colorado Springs, we no longer asked for the level of support for the “Statewide Consensus Recommendation”.