

Amendment 59 SAFE Speaker's Training

What is Amendment 59?

Amendment 59 is a citizens' initiative on the 2008 statewide ballot. This measure will require Colorado's government to function more responsibly, by saving money when times are good instead of cutting essential services when times are bad. Amendment 59 will help Colorado's schools prepare students for the 21st-century economy.

What does Amendment 59 do?

- Ensures that government saves in good economic times, so our kids don't suffer in bad times
- Creates a long-term savings account for education (SAFE) without increasing tax rates
- Preserves the right of citizens to vote on tax increases
- Untangles the fiscal knot in Colorado's constitution

Why is the Faith Community Involved in Amendment 59?

Faith Communities believe budgets are moral documents which must embody the common good and reflect our shared responsibility to each other. Just tax policies are investments in our future, ensuring that the benefits of society are broadly shared. Ending poverty must be a priority in all policymaking. Faithful citizenship calls us to vote and participate in the electoral process.

Through Colorado Religious Communities for the Common Good, faith communities throughout Colorado were very active in their support for Referenda C that passed in 2005.

Main Talking Points to Emphasize

Amendment 59 creates a rainy day fund for education

It requires our state to save money when times are good so that we don't have to cut schools and other essential services when times are bad. The S.A.F.E. funds must be used for P-12 education programs including reducing class size, teacher incentives, student safety, new technology and school construction.

Amendment 59 enjoys strong support from the Education community

The Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Education Association are all endorsers of SAFE.

Amendment 59 is a bi-partisan effort

Democrats Andrew Romanoff, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Treasurer Cary Kennedy, and Republicans Rep. Brad Young, former chair of the Joint Budget Committee and Attorney General John Suthers are all in favor of Amendment 59.

Amendment 59 does not raise tax rates

Amendment 59 dedicates all state revenue above the TABOR limit to a P-12 education savings account. This neither changes tax rates nor allows the state to collect one cent more than it would already collect from taxpayers.

Amendment 59 will potentially help protect many other important programs in Colorado's Budget

While the most direct benefits of Amendment 59 will be for education, the fact that S.A.F.E. allows the state to retain all revenues collected means that many budget cuts to other critical programs, such as senior services, health care, mental health care, affordable housing and higher education are likely to be avoided in the future.

Elevator Speech on Amendment 59

Common Questions about Amendment 59

Does the Colorado Government need more money?

The Colorado Children's Campaign recently reported that the number of children living in poverty in Colorado increased by 73% between 2000 and 2006 - the largest rate of increase in the nation. At the same time, our lowest-in-the-nation budget forced us to shrink and even dismantle many of the safety net programs for these families.

How does Amendment 59 affect Amendment 23 passed by voters in 2000? Does Amendment 59 do away with TABOR?

While responsibly supporting public education, Amendment 59 removes the requirement in Amendment 23 that spending on P-12 education increase annually by at least the rate of inflation after 2011. In 1992 TABOR required strict annual spending limits. In 2000, Amendment 23 required strict annual spending increases. Together, these changes untangle the fiscal knot in our constitution resulting from two conflicting policies.

What about Referenda C passed in 2005?

Referenda C allowed Colorado to keep all the revenue it collected for five years, and will expire in 2010. Amendment 59 will make permanent this provision of Referenda C, without collecting one additional penny of taxes.

What does the opposition say about Amendment 59?

Didn't Ref. C fix our financial mess? Why are you asking for more money?

Ref. C was always described as a 5-year timeout from the effects of TABOR, allowing Colorado to keep all the revenue it collected during those five years. It was not a permanent fix to Colorado's budget constraints.

The money from Ref. C was not spent how it was described!

On the Colorado Legislative Website (www.leg.state.co.us) you can find a detailed report on how the money was spent from Ref. C. The money from Ref. C allowed the Colorado Legislature to restore many of the cuts made during the economic downturn of 2001.

Isn't this just a big tax increase?

Amendment 59 will allow Colorado to keep all the revenue it currently collects in taxes. It will not raise taxes one penny. It is true that you will not receive a TABOR rebate in the future, something you have not received since 2001.

Won't this take away my tax refund?

The short answer is no! There is certainly some confusion out there in terminology. Your tax REFUND is money you get back from Colorado when you overpay your state taxes. Amendment 59 will not affect this in any way. Your tax REBATE is money that is returned to you in years when Colorado collects more in tax money than it can spend according to the budget constraints.

The only people supporting those who have money at stake.

If you consider the citizens of Colorado a special interest group, then yes, you are correct.

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