



March 15, 2016

Letter in Support of ‘Raise the Bar – Protect the Constitution’ Initiative

Dear Interested Coloradoan:

For decades, Colorado’s constitution has been subject to attack by special interest groups attempting to advance their political agendas, leaving Colorado citizens and legislators to clean up the aftermath. As one of sixteen states where citizens can bypass the state legislature and place proposed changes to state law and constitutional amendments on the ballot, Colorado has become a virtual petri dish for political experiments. As one of the easiest state constitutions to amend in the United States, the Colorado Constitution now contains over 150 amendments and 75,000 words, many of which produce conflicting and unsustainable policies.

Contributing to the ease of citizen initiated ballot measures is the relative ease of collecting signatures, as there are currently no requirements to collect signature state wide for initiatives that will impact the entire state of Colorado. Furthermore, Colorado is one of only three states in the country that has the same requirements for both citizen-initiated constitutional amendments and citizen initiated statutory changes. As a result, out of state special interest campaigns increasingly propose amendments to the constitution because they are more difficult to change in the future.

The constitutional reform measure resulting from the ‘Building a Better Colorado’ public process will help restore the sanctity of our state constitution while ensuring that all Coloradans—not just those who live in the I-25 corridor—have a say in constitutional amendments. It is a meaningful and reasonable solution to a problem that has plagued Colorado for years and is desperately needed to get Colorado back on track.

This initiative has two basic parts. First, proponents of a ballot initiative would need to obtain signatures from 2% of registered voters in each Colorado State Senate District to place an initiative on the ballot. This would be in addition to the standing requirement that petitioners receive signatures from 5% of the general electorate. Second, once on the ballot, the proposed initiative would require approval by 55% of the general electorate in a statewide vote to add the new provisions to the constitution.

Raising the bar to amend our constitution will have a meaningful impact on both the clarity and purpose of our founding document. Over time, narrowly focused amendments have created conflicting policies now embedded in the Colorado Constitution. And adding to the confusion, state legislators have been forced to pass clarifying amendments that do nothing more than clean up the existing structure. Constitutions are meant to protect fundamental rights and outline the framework of government. Over decades of unsustainable additions to our constitution, we have lost that overall vision and have created a conflicting, ineffective, and confusing guiding document. While this initiative strengthens the ballot initiative process, it does *nothing* to take away voters’ rights to propose an initiative and place it on the ballot for the entire state to vote on. It simply raises the bar for changing the constitution as opposed to state statutes, while ensuring that the entire state has a say in constitutional questions. Our constitution is too important to leave to the political whims of the day. Join us in restoring the overall purpose of the Colorado Constitution and in fighting to protect the very document that made Colorado the best state in the nation. Support this initiative and help protect Colorado’s future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Mitchell', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Wendy Mitchell
President and CEO