

Colorado TABOR: A Survey of Colorado Likely Voters Age 18+

April 2004



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Data Collected by Alan Newman Research, Inc. Report Prepared by Joanne Binette

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Background

The Taxpayers' Bill of Rights, or TABOR, was passed by Colorado voters in 1992 as an amendment to the state's constitution. TABOR has had wide-ranging, profound fiscal effects that could not have been foreseen. Most Coloradans were not aware of most of TABOR's provisions and believed they were voting primarily on taxpayers' right to vote on any tax increases. While this is one aspect of TABOR, the amendment's reach and complexity have largely contributed to Colorado's current fiscal problems.

TABOR limits revenue growth for state and local governments in Colorado and requires that any tax increase in any state or local government (counties, cities, towns, school districts and special districts) must be approved by the affected voters. Specifically, TABOR limits revenue the state government can retain each year from all sources except federal funds to the previous year's allowed collections, plus a percentage adjustment equal to the percentage growth in population plus the inflation rate. Any revenues received in excess of this limit must be refunded to the voters. TABOR does not allow increases in funding for state services, so once they have been cut back they cannot be restored, even if state revenues increase as the economy grows.

The effects of TABOR are compounded by Amendment 23 which was passed by Colorado voters in 2000. This amendment guarantees that funding for K-12 education increases every year after adjusting for population growth and inflation. Under current TABOR rules, this means that not only is spending growth on all other state services such as health and long-term care restricted, it is actually reduced each year. Funding for all state services with the exception of K-12 education is gradually being squeezed out of the budget. For example, it is projected that by the year 2010, there will be no state support for higher education in Colorado. Only citizens with private financial means will be able to attend college in Colorado.¹

From November 12 through November 23, 2004, AARP conducted a telephone survey of 1,001 randomly selected Colorado residents age 18 or older who report they are registered to vote and are likely to vote in the 2006 Colorado state election. The survey explores their opinions about the Colorado state budget, ways to generate money for state services, and changing or repealing TABOR.

¹ Clare Hushbeck. (December 2004). State Affairs, AARP.

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Highlights

- More than eight in ten likely voters in Colorado strongly (46%) or somewhat agree (35%) that the state has a serious budget problem.
- More than three-quarters of likely voters in Colorado say that it is very (51%) or somewhat important (25%) that TABOR be changed to allow funding for state services to be restored when economic growth gets back on track.
- About seven in ten (72%) Colorado likely voters support changing TABOR to allow funding for state services that were cut during periods of recession to be restored to previous levels when the economy improves, while only about one in five (22%) oppose this action.
- Of those Colorado likely voters who oppose changing TABOR permanently to restore funding for state services, more than one in five (21%) support changing TABOR for one time only to allow funding for state services to be restored.
- Likely voters in Colorado are split in their agreement with the state keeping all or part of the projected tax refunds as ways to generate money for state services.
 - About half (48%) agree with the state keeping <u>all</u> of the projected tax refunds and nearly as many (44%) disagree.
 - Almost half (47%) agree with the state keeping <u>part</u> of the projected tax refunds and about the same proportion (46%) disagree.
- More than half of Colorado likely voters disagree with selling public buildings and leasing them back from the buyer (57%) and selling the proceeds from tobacco settlement for 50 cents on the dollar (55%) to generate money for state services.
- More than four in five Colorado likely voters believe it is important to restore funding for services that allow the elderly and disabled to stay in their own homes (89%), services for the mentally ill (86%), and higher education (83%).
- More than half of likely voters in Colorado strongly (30%) or somewhat (25%) support repealing TABOR outright. About nine in ten (91%) of these voters would still repeal TABOR even if it meant they would no longer receive a TABOR refund.
- Three in four Colorado likely voters strongly (45%) or somewhat support (30%) changing TABOR so that funding for state services can be increased as the population grows and the need for services increases.

Findings

More than eight in ten Colorado likely voters agree that the state has a serious budget problem.

Does Colorado have a serious budget problem? Over eight in ten likely voters (N=1,001) in Colorado strongly (46%) or somewhat agree (35%) that Somewhat Strongly Colorado has a serious budget agree agree 35% problem. Only one in ten 46% disagree. Somewhat disagree 7%

About seven in ten Colorado likely voters have seen, read, or heard something about TABOR in the last two years.

Just over seven in ten (71%) likely voters in Colorado say they have seen, read, or heard something about TABOR in the last two years, while fewer than three in ten (28%) have not.



Not sure/no

response

9%

Strongly

disagree

3%

More than three-quarters of Colorado likely voters believe that it is important to change TABOR so that funding for state services can be restored.

During the recent economic recession, in order to balance the state budget Colorado cut state services such as health, transportation, and higher education. TABOR does not allow spending for services to be restored when the economy improves.

Over three in four likely voters in Colorado say that it is very (51%) or somewhat important (25%) that TABOR be changed to allow funding for state services to be restored when economic growth gets back on track.



*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

More than seven in ten likely voters in Colorado support changing TABOR to allow funding for state services cut during recession periods to be restored.

Over seven in ten likely voters in Colorado strongly (42%) or somewhat support (30%) changing TABOR to allow funding for state services that were cut during periods of recession to be restored to previous levels when the economy improves.



Of those Colorado likely voters who oppose changing TABOR permanently to restore funding for state services, more than one in five say they would support changing TABOR one time only to restore funding.

The 22 percent of Colorado likely voters who oppose changing TABOR permanently to allow funding for state services that were cut during recession periods to be restored or who were not sure about a permanent change were asked whether they support or oppose changing TABOR for <u>one time only</u> in order to restore funding (n=280).

More than one in five (21%) of these likely voters support changing TABOR for one time only in order to restore funding for state services. More than six in ten (62%) are opposed and about one in six (17%) are unsure.





Likely voters in Colorado are split in their agreement with the state keeping all or part of the projected tax refunds as ways to generate money for state services.

Likely voters in Colorado were given four proposals to generate money for state services and asked whether they agree or disagree with each one. Colorado likely voters are nearly evenly split on their agreement with the state keeping all or part of the projected tax refunds to generate money for state services. Nearly half (48%) agree with the state keeping <u>all</u> of the projected tax refunds, while slightly fewer (44%) disagree. Likewise, almost half (47%) agree with the state keeping <u>part</u> of the projected tax refunds, while almost as many (46%) disagree.

Over half of Colorado likely voters disagree with selling public buildings and leasing them back from the buyer and selling the proceeds from tobacco settlement for 50 cents on the dollar to generate money for state services (57% and 55%), compared to about three in ten who agree with these proposals (28% and 30%).

It is worth noting that 15 percent of Colorado likely voters are not sure whether they agree or disagree with selling and leasing back public buildings and selling the tobacco settlement. This is almost twice as many who are not sure whether they agree or disagree with the state keeping all or part of the projected tax refunds.



Opinion on Proposals to Generate Money for State Services* (N=1,001)

*Percentages in graph may differ slightly from text due to rounding.

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More than four in five Colorado likely voters believe it is important to restore funding for services that allow the elderly and disabled to stay at home, services for the mentally ill, and higher education.

Likely voters in Colorado were asked how important it is to restore funding for specific state services. More than six in ten (61%) believe it is very important to restore funding for services that allow elderly and disabled people who need assistance with daily activities to stay in their own homes as long as possible, and about another three in ten (29%) say it is somewhat important.

More than half (52%) believe it is very important to restore funding for services for the mentally ill and their families, while approximately another third (34%) say it is somewhat important.

Over half (56%) of Colorado likely voters think it is very important to restore funding for higher education, and more than a quarter (27%) believe it is somewhat important.



Importance of Restoring Funding for State Services (N=1,001)

The majority of Colorado likely voters support the repeal of TABOR.



An overwhelming majority of Colorado likely voters who support the repeal of TABOR, still support repeal even if it meant giving up their TABOR refunds.

Colorado likely voters who support the repeal of TABOR were then asked if they would still support the repeal of TABOR even if they would no longer receive their TABOR refunds (n=547).

More than nine in ten (91%) still support the repeal of TABOR under this condition. Support for Repealing TABOR Even if It Meant Colorado Residents Would No Longer Receive TABOR Refunds Among Likely Voters Who Support Repealing TABOR Outright (n=547)



Three-quarters of Colorado likely voters support changing TABOR so that funding for state services can be increased as the population grows and the need for services increases.

Likely voters in Colorado were asked whether they would support or oppose changing TABOR so that funding for state services such as higher education, health care for children, roads and highways, and nursing homes could be increased as the population grows and the need for these services increases.

Three in four strongly (45%) or somewhat support (30%) changing TABOR for this purpose.



A Profile of Colorado Likely Voters

One thousand and one Colorado likely voters participated in the survey. Almost all (95%) respondents are regular voters. Seventy-seven percent of those surveyed report they *always vote* while another 18 percent say they *sometimes miss one* vote. Respondents are fairly evenly split across the political parties. Thirty-seven percent are Republicans, 29 percent are Democrats, and 28 percent are Independents. Respondents are split in their political views between conservative and moderate while fewer are liberal. Thirty-eight percent are conservative, another 38 percent are moderate, and 18 percent are liberal.



^{*}Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

More than half (55%) of respondents are age fifty or older. Most respondents are women (54%). More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents are married; while one in ten have never been married (11%) or are divorced (10%). Over half (55%) of respondents have a college education or higher, while 14 percent hold high school diplomas or the equivalent. Sixty-two percent are employed either full-or part-time. Another 24 percent of respondents are retired. Just over one in eight (14%) respondents have an annual household income below \$30,000, more than a third (37%) have a household income of \$30,000 but less than \$75,000, and over a quarter (28%) have a household income of \$75,000 or more. Respondents represent 55 of Colorado's 63 counties; there were no respondents from Bent, Clear Creek, Costilla, Hinsdale, Kiowa, Mineral, Saguache, and San Juan Counties.

Conclusions

Most likely voters in Colorado believe that the state has a serious budget problem and many have seen, read, or heard something about TABOR in the last two years. Colorado likely voters support changing current TABOR law to allow funding for state services that have been cut during recession periods to be restored to their previous levels. Furthermore, likely voters in the state also support changing TABOR so that funding for state services can continue to increase as the population grows. More than eight in ten likely voters in Colorado believe it is important to restore funding for services that allow the elderly and disabled to remain in their homes, services for the mentally ill, and higher education.

Although Colorado likely voters believe it is important to restore funding for state services they are unsure about specific ways to go about it. About half agree and another half disagree with allowing the state to keep all or part of the projected tax refunds as ways to generate money for state services. Over half disagree with selling public buildings and leasing back from the buyer and selling the tobacco settlement fund; and another 15 percent say they are unsure of these two methods.

Many likely voters in Colorado would like to see total repeal of TABOR. More than half support total repeal and more than nine in ten of these respondents still support repeal even if it meant they would no longer receive a TABOR refund.

Methodology

AARP commissioned Alan Newman Research, Inc. to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of self-reported registered likely voters age 18 or older in Colorado. A total of 1,001 interviews were completed including 551 interviews among registered voters age 50 or older. The survey was conducted between November 12 – November 23, 2004.² The survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 percent. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3.1 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every registered likely voter age 18 or older in Colorado had been surveyed. Survey responses are not weighted due to the fact that there is no reliable state-specific source on registered likely voters in Colorado. Unweighted responses to all survey questions are in the attached annotated questionnaire.

² The response rate is 25 percent and the cooperation rate is 52 percent. The response rate is Response Rate 3 and the cooperation rate is Cooperation Rate 3 from the following publication: The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR.

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Annotated Questionnaire

Colorado's TABOR: An AARP Survey of Adults Age 18+

Unweighted N = 1,001; Sampling Error = 3.1%; Response Rate = 25% (Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.)

Introduction/Screener

. I'm calling on behalf of Alan Newman Research, a national opinion research Hello, my name is firm. Tonight we are calling Colorado residents to find out their opinions on proposed tax and budget legislation. It is important to us that you know we are NOT telemarketers. This is NOT a sales call and you will NOT be asked to buy anything either now or later.

INTERVIEWERS – IF NECESSARY USE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

. I'm calling from Alan Newman Research, a national opinion research firm located in My name is Richmond, Virginia. Let me assure you, this is NOT a sales call and you will NOT be asked to buy anything either now or later. We are NOT telemarketers. You will not be asked to buy anything either now or later. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. The survey should only take a few minutes (7 minutes) of your time depending on your answers.]

Respondent Selection

S1. RECORD GENDER OF PERSON WHO ANSWERED PHONE:

- 1) Male
- 2) Female
- **S2**. Before we begin, I need to know if you are registered to vote at the address where I have currently reached you?
 - Yes **>** [SKIP TO S4] 1)
 - 2) No

2)

- DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE 3)
- REFUSED → [TERMINATE] 4)
- **S3.** Is there someone else at home who is registered to vote at this address?
 - Yes, Person Coming to Phone 1)
 - 2) Yes, BUT Person not available right now
 - Yes, BUT Person never available 3)
- → [SKIP TO INTRO] → [SCHEDULE CALLBACK]
- → ISCREENOUT
- No one in house hold is registered to vote at this address -> [SCREENOUT] 4)
- 5) DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE → [TERMINATE]
- REFUSED → [TERMINATE] 6)
- S4. Thinking about the upcoming state elections for Colorado Governor and Legislators in 2006, how likely do you think you are to vote in these 2006 elections? Would you say you are very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely to vote in these state elections in 2006?
 - Very Likely \rightarrow [SKIP TO Q1] 1)
 - → [SKIP TO Q1] Somewhat Likely
 - Not very Likely → [SCREENOUT] 3)
 - Not At All Likely → [SCREENOUT] 4)
 - 5)
 - → [TERMINATE] 6) REFUSED

[PROGRAMMERS: CREATE SEPARATE DISPOSITIONS FOR SCREENOUT BECAUSE OF NO REGISTERED VOTER AND SCREENOUT FOR NOT LIKELY TO VOTE]

Main Questionnaire

Q1. How strongly do you agree or disagree that Colorado has a serious budget problem? Do you..... (READ EACH OPTION)

	<u>%</u>
Strongly agree	46
Somewhat agree	35
Somewhat disagree	7
Strongly disagree	3
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	9
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

Q2. The Taxpayer's Bill of Rights was passed by Colorado voters in 1992 as an amendment to the state's constitution, and is known simply as TABOR. Have you seen, read, or heard anything about TABOR in the last two years?

[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: If respondent does not know what TABOR is read: *TABOR does not allow increases in funding for state services, so once they have been cut back they cannot be restored, even if state revenues increase as the economy grows.*]

	<u>%</u>
Yes	71
No	28
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	1
Refused (DO NOT READ)	0

Q3. During the recent economic recession, in order to balance the state budget Colorado cut state services such as health, transportation, and higher education. TABOR does not allow spending for services to be restored when the economy improves. How important is it to you that TABOR be changed to allow funding for state services to be restored when economic growth gets back on track?

Would it be (R	READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Very important	51
Somewhat important	25
Not very important	8
Not at all important	11
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT RE.	AD) 5
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

Q4. How strongly do you support or oppose changing TABOR to allow funding for state services that were cut during periods of recession to be restored to previous levels when the economy improves?

Do you (R	(READ EACH OPTION)	
	<u>%</u>	
Strongly support (GO TO Q.6)	42	
Somewhat support (GO TO Q.6)	30	
Somewhat oppose	9	
Strongly oppose	13	
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT R	EAD) 6	
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5	

	<u>%</u>
Strongly support	5
Somewhat support	16
Somewhat oppose	16
Strongly oppose	46
Don't know/not sure (DO NOT READ)	17
Refused (DO NOT READ)	0

- Q6. Colorado state officials are considering several measures to generate money for state services. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following proposed measures to generate money for state services. [RANDOMIZE THE ORDER OF 6A-6D.]

D0 y0u	(KEAD EACH OF II)
	<u>%</u>
Strongly agree	7
Somewhat agree	21
Somewhat disagree	22
Strongly disagree	35
Don't know/not sure (DO NOT	(READ) 15
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

b. How strongly do you agree or disagree with selling the proceeds of the tobacco settlement for 50 cents on the dollar?

Do you	(READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Strongly agree	14
Somewhat agree	16
Somewhat disagree	16
Strongly disagree	40
Don't know/not sure (DO NO)	Г READ) 15
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

c. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the state keeping <u>part</u> of the projected tax refunds?

Do you	(READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Strongly agree	20
Somewhat agree	27
Somewhat disagree	16
Strongly disagree	29
Don't know/not sure (DO NO	T READ) 8
Refused (DO NOT READ)	0

•	<u>%</u>
Strongly agree	22
Somewhat agree	26
Somewhat disagree	19
Strongly disagree	25
Don't know/not sure (DO NOT READ)	8
Refused (DO NOT READ)	0

Q7. TABOR does not allow increases in funding for state services, so once they have been cut back they cannot be restored, even if state revenues increase as the economy grows. Please tell me how important it is to you that funding be restored for each of the following state services.

[RANDOMIZE THE ORDER OF 7A-7C.]

7. (continued)

a. How important is it to you that state funds be restored for services that allow elderly and disabled people who need assistance with daily activities to stay in their own homes as long as possible?

Would it be	(READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Very important	61
Somewhat important	29
Not very important	5
Not at all important	3
Don't know/Not sure (DO NC	DT READ) 2
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

would it be	(READ EACH OP II
	<u>%</u>
Very important	56
Somewhat important	27
Not very important	9
Not at all important	6
Don't know/Not sure (DO NO	T READ) 1
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

c. How important is it to you that state funds be restored for services for the mentally ill and their families?

Would it be	(READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Very important	52
Somewhat important	34
Not very important	8
Not at all important	4
Don't know/Not sure (DO NO	T READ) 2
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

	<u>%</u>
Strongly support repealing	30
Somewhat support repealing	25
Somewhat oppose repealing (GO TO Q.10)	14
Strongly oppose repealing (GO TO Q.10)	20
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ) (GO TO Q.10)	11
Refused (DO NOT READ) (GO TO Q.10)	<.5

(ASK RESPONDENT ONLY IF <u>SUPPORT</u> REPEAL IN Q. 8)

Q9. Would you still support repealing TABOR even if it meant you would no longer receive a TABOR refund? (n=495 Those respondents who support repealing TABOR outright)

	<u>%</u>
Yes	91
No	5
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	4
Refused (DO NOT READ)	0

Q10. How strongly do you support or oppose changing TABOR so that funding for state services such as higher education, health care for children, roads and highways, and nursing homes could be increased as the population grows and the need for these services increases?

Do you	(READ EACH OPTION)
	<u>%</u>
Strongly support	45
Somewhat support	30
Somewhat oppose	9
Strongly oppose	10
Don't know/not sure (DO NOT	READ) 5
Refused (DO NOT READ)	<.5

Finally, the following few questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.

• /

Demographics

D1. RECORD RESPONDENT'S GENDER:

	<u>%</u>
Male	46
Female	54

D2. What is your age as of your last birthday? (IN YEARS) _____

<u>%</u>
11
31
35
20

D3. What is your marital status? Are you currently..... (READ LIST)

	<u>%</u>
Currently married,	68
Currently living with partner/significant other	1
Widowed	7
Divorced	10
Separated	1
Never married	11
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	<.5
Refused (DO NOT READ)	3

D4. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (READ ANSWER CATEGORIES)

	<u>%</u>
Less than high school	2
High school graduate or equivalent	14
Some college or technical training beyond high school	27
College graduate	30
Post-graduate or professional degree	25
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	<.5
Refused (DO NOT READ)	2

D5. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently....

	<u>%</u>
Employed or self-employed full-time	50
Employed or self employed part-time	12
Retired and not working	24
Unemployed and looking for work	3
Homemaker	6
Disabled	2
Student	1
Something else [Specify:]	<.5
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	<.5
Refused (DO NOT READ)	2

D6. Sometimes things come up and people are not able to vote. In the recent 2004 election for President, were you able to vote?

	<u>%</u>
Yes	97
No	1
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	0
Refused (DO NOT READ)	2

D7. Thinking about your state elections for Colorado Governor and Legislators in the last ten years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior? Would you say you always vote, sometimes miss one, rarely vote, never vote, or were you not eligible to vote in the last ten years?

	<u>%</u>
Always vote	77
Sometimes miss one	18
Rarely vote	2
Never vote	<.5
Not eligible to vote in the last ten years	0
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	1
Refused (DO NOT READ)	2
Depends (VOLUNTEERED)	0

D8. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	<u>%</u>
Democrat	29
Republican	37
Independent	28
Other [Specify:]	1
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	1
Refused (DO NOT READ)	5

D9. Also, generally speaking, would you characterize your political views as being...? [READ LIST ENTER ONLY ONE]

Conservative Moderate	<u>%</u> 38 38
Liberal	18
Other [Specify:] (DO NOT READ)	1
Don't Know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	1
Refused (DO NOT READ)	4

D10. Now, for statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household's income before taxes in 2003.

Was it... (READ ANSWER CATEGORIES)

	<u>%</u>	
Less than \$10,000	2	
\$10,000 but less than \$20,000	4	
\$20,000 but less than \$30,000	8	
\$30,000 but less than \$40,000	9	
\$40,000 but less than \$50,000	9	
\$50,000 but less than \$75,000	18	
\$75,000 but less than \$100,000	13	
Or was your income \$100,000 or more	15	
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	3	
Refused (DO NOT READ)	18	
D11. What is your 5-digit zip code?		
D10. And, finally, may I verify that I reached you at: ()		

Thank you for participating! Your Opinion Counts.

AARP

Knowledge Management For more information contact Joanne Binette (202) 434-6303