

WHO'S WHO?

in Colorado Politics



**Voting is a public way of saying,
“Our families count, and together
we can make a difference!”**

Elected leaders make decisions that either help or hurt our families. The simple fact is that politicians pay more attention to communities who get out and vote.

Who's Who? covers some general information about how our state government works across all three state branches, legislative, executive, and judicial. It also covers local governments. All of the positions featured in the *Who's Who?* — both elected and appointed — impact families in our state.

FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH

US PRESIDENT

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Heads the executive branch of the federal government, serving for four years with a two-term (eight years) maximum.

- Oversees cabinet-level departments, including US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- Proposes the federal budget for approval by Congress.
- Has the power to veto (reject) bills passed by Congress; Congress can overturn a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.
- Serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- Appoints federal judges



Can take executive action to move Immigration and Customs Enforcement policy. For example, in 2015 the president authorized ICE raids that resulted in the deportation and separation of families.



Recommends funding levels for programs such as childcare, healthcare, and domestic violence services.



Nominates judges for lifetime appointment to Supreme Court which rules on issues such as equal rights and privacy.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRANCH — US CONGRESS

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 435 members of the US House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for re-election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Currently Colorado has 7 representatives.

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Allocates money to federal programs in yearly budget.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.



Approves funding levels for federal programs such as Head Start, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, Social Security, relief for victims of natural disasters, military spending, childcare, healthcare, and domestic violence services.



Creates all laws, including those governing immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, and labor and environmental protections.

US SENATE

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 100 US Senators, each serving a six-year term. Each state elects two senators in a statewide election. Senate races are staggered so that only one senator in a state is up for election at a time.

- In addition to what is listed for House of Representatives (above), the Senate approves the president's appointments to important positions, including the US Supreme Court and the Cabinet.

Same as US House of Representatives (page 1).

STATE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The legislative part of the Colorado state government, is divided into two houses, the Colorado State Senate and the Colorado State House of Representatives, and meets every year from January through May.


CO STATE SENATE


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU


The state is divided into 35 State Senate districts and each district elects one senator. Senators are elected in two classes, so half of the senators are elected every general election.

- Enact state laws in areas such as childcare, drug policy, healthcare, state taxes, education, and conservation of natural resources.
- Share budget-making responsibilities with the governor.
- Sit on committees that evaluate legislation based on certain areas of government like education, finance, and health

 Makes decisions about state funding priorities, including how much the state budget should be paying for healthcare services, roads, education, and prisons, and how federal programs like Medicaid and Medicare are financed.

 Creates laws that determine what is safe — from drugs and guns, to healthcare providers, oil companies, and more.

 Makes laws that affect the availability of public programs, like Colorado Child Care Assistance Program and Children's Health Plan Plus (CHP+).

 Makes laws that create agencies, or oversee products, services, or providers.

CO STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 65 State House Districts. Each district elects one representative. All State House seats are up for election every two years.

Same as above.

Same as above.



WHAT ARE DISTRICTS AND HOW ARE THEY DETERMINED?

Voting districts are determined using US Census data and the Colorado constitution. Voting districts are different from municipalities, counties, and school districts.

For example:

- Senate District 35 includes 57 different school districts, with a population of over 140,000. Hispanics are 36% of the people living in the district. Only 60% of eligible voters are registered in the district.
- House District 31 includes 4 different school districts, with a population of about 80,000. Hispanics are 34% of the people living in the district. Only 58% of eligible voters are registered in the district.

LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS

There are two common forms of local government in Colorado: **mayor–city council** and **city council–manager**.

Mayor–City Council • A mayor–city council government is one where both mayor and city council create policies and ordinances, as well as supervise the administration of the city and ensure that city ordinances are enforced. Denver is an example of a mayor–city council


MAYOR


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The mayor is elected from the city or town at large.

- Leads council or board of trustees meetings.
- Has the same voting powers as other mayor–city council members.
- If limited to breaking tie votes, then the mayor can veto spending ordinances.
- Works with mayor–city council members to create and pass policies and ordinances.

 Can provide leadership to promote diversity and inclusion of all citizens in our community.

 Can provide financial support to community services, like services for low-income women and families.

 Makes zoning decisions that can either promote or prevent the development of low-income housing.

CITY COUNCIL OR TOWN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

City Council members are elected to represent a specific ward. Members of the Town Board of Trustees are elected from the town at large.

- Creates policies and ordinances.
- Appoints a clerk, treasurer, and town attorney, or adopts an ordinance that provides for the election of these offices.
- May appoint an administrator to oversee staff and the daily operations of the town.
- Sets city taxes and manages the city budget.
- Oversees all construction and improvement projects in the city.
- Can overturn the mayor's veto by a two-thirds vote.

Same as above.

WHAT IF I CAN'T VOTE?

You must be at least 18 and a US citizen to vote. People with a criminal conviction who have served their sentence can vote in Colorado. (See the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition for more info: <http://www.ccjrc.org/voting.shtml>.) **If you can't vote, you can still make a difference!**

- Encourage and educate people who can vote.
- Share this voter guide at your church or with your neighbors, friends, and family.
- Attend town hall meetings and other events hosted by your legislators to raise the issues that affect your family. Town hall meetings give you a chance to speak directly to your elected officials in a more informal setting.
- Testify on proposed bills that affect you and your family.
- Visit the Capitol with an advocacy organization that works on the issues that you care about.



City Council–Manager • A city council–manager government is one where the mayor and city council create policies and ordinances, and the city manager, elected or appointed, implements and administers the council’s policies. Arvada, Northglenn, Commerce City, and Pueblo are examples of city council–managers.

MAYOR

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The mayor is elected from the city at large.

- Leads council meetings.
- Has the same voting powers as other city council–manager members.
- If limited to breaking tie votes, then the mayor can veto spending ordinances.
- Works with city council–manager members to pass policies and ordinances.



Can provide leadership to promote diversity and inclusion of all citizens in our community.



Can provide financial support to community services, which support low-income women and families.



Makes zoning decisions that can either promote or prevent the development of low-income housing.

CITY COUNCIL

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

City Council members are elected to represent a specific ward.

- Creates policies and ordinances.
- Sets city taxes and manages the city budget.
- Oversees all construction and improvement projects in the city.
- Can overturn the mayor’s veto by a two-thirds vote.

Same as above.

CITY MANAGER

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- Supervises the daily operation of the city and ensures that city ordinances are enforced



Can provide leadership to promote diversity and inclusion of all citizens through administrative policy.



Can appoint and remove all officers and employees in the administrative service of the city.



ELEPHANT CIRCLE brings the strength of advocacy, scientific inquiry, information, and education to issues of birth and reproductive justice, protecting mothers, their children, families, and health providers.

COLOR is dedicated to building a movement of Latinas, their families, and their allies through leadership development, organizing, and advocacy to create opportunity and achieve reproductive justice.

STRONG FAMILIES is a national initiative to change how we think, feel, and make policy about families. Strong Families is a project of Forward Together.

For more information, visit Elephant Circle at elephantcircle.net and COLOR at colorlatina.org.



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