



WHO'S WHO IN COLORADO POLITICS?



Voting is a public way of saying, "Our families count, and all of our lives matter!"

Civic participation means getting everyday folks involved in the decisions that affect our families and communities. Election season is an especially important time for us to speak up, and there are many ways we can all get involved in the process, regardless of our citizenship status or whether we can vote.

Elections matter because elected leaders can make decisions that either help or hurt our families. Politicians pay more attention to communities who participate in elections.

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



Visit **STRONGFAMILIES.TURBOVOTE.ORG** to register to vote, sign up for an absentee ballot, and receive reminders about upcoming elections.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The General Assembly, the lawmaking (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.

WHO IS ELECTED





CO State Senators:
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.

CO State Representatives:
The state has 65 State House Districts. Each district elects one representative every two years.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES




- Enact state laws in areas such as child care, 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, health.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU







-  Decide how the state budget should be used (for healthcare, roads, education, prisons, etc.) and how federal programs (like Medicaid and Medicare) are financed.
-  Create laws that determine what is safe (from drugs and guns, to healthcare providers, oil companies, and more).
-  Make laws that affect the availability of public programs, like Colorado Child Care Assistance Program and Children's Health Plan Plus (CHP+).
-  Make laws that create agencies, or oversee products, services, or providers.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The Colorado executive branch is responsible for administration of state laws and administering the executive budget. The executive branch includes the Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and Attorney General.

WHO IS ELECTED	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
<p>Governor: The Governor heads the state executive branch and is elected every four years in midterm election years (not during presidential election years).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sends proposed budget to the CO Legislature for approval. • Has the power to veto bills passed by the General Assembly. • Grants pardons, reprieves, and clemency. 	<p> Governor's budget proposes funding levels for programs such as child care, healthcare, and domestic violence services.</p> <p> Can call a special session of the CO Legislature to address important and urgent issues like state funding for Colorado schools.</p> <p> Sets the tone for how laws are implemented and makes priorities.</p>

Part of the executive branch, an additional 19 state agencies are responsible for administering and regulating the health, education, public safety, natural resources, agriculture, highways, and social services provided in Colorado. The Governor appoints 15 of the 19 department heads. Below are just a few of the key responsibilities held by five of these appointed offices.

GOVERNOR APPOINTS	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
<p>Head of Dept. of Corrections (DOC): The DOC manages and operates 19 secure prison facilities and the youth offender system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervises individuals in community corrections programs and on parole. • Runs victim services programs. • Operates the training academy for corrections staff. 	<p> Makes decisions about birthing policies and practices in DOC facilities.</p> <p> Sets rates for CIPS phone calls and other communications with inmates.</p> <p> Budget of \$700 million has grown 10 times since 1985.</p>
<p>Head of Dept. of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE): The CDPHE oversees public health and environment (air and water quality, etc.) agencies; birth, death, and other records; and emergency preparedness and response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates more than 70 clinics and sites for family planning and preventive health services. • Regulates health facilities. • Oversees birth, death, and other records, including gender re-assignment forms. 	<p> Administers WIC (special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children).</p> <p> Implements the rules that govern birth centers.</p> <p> Regulates medical marijuana providers and facilities. (Retail marijuana is regulated by the Department of Revenue.)</p>
<p>Head of Dept. of Regulatory Agencies (DORA): DORA, the state's regulatory department, focuses on consumer protection, as well as regulation of banking, financial services, insurance, professional occupations, public utilities, and real estate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides licensing for nearly 100 different professions from midwives to therapists, barbers, insurance agents and doctors. • Through the Division of Insurance, regulates insurance companies (health, life, and auto). • Runs the Civil Rights Division to eliminate discrimination. 	<p> Implements the rules that govern the practice of midwifery (nurse midwives and professional midwives).</p> <p> Collects licensing fees and investigates and disciplines professionals.</p> <p> Holds insurance companies accountable, determines if their maternity care plans are adequate.</p>

GOVERNOR APPOINTS**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES****WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU**

Head of Dept. of Public Safety (CDPS): The CDPS oversees a 1,600-person department, including the Colorado State Patrol, Bureau of Investigation, Fire Prevention and Control, and Division of Criminal Justice and Homeland Security.

- Runs community corrections program that provide alternatives to incarceration in prison.
- Runs programs that address juvenile justice and domestic violence.
- Trains and runs the State Patrol.



Allocates resources to programs from training for domestic violence perpetrators, to school safety officers, to citizen preparedness for emergencies.

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Colorado judicial branch interprets and administers the law and consists of various courts in Colorado, including 64 county and municipal courts, the state court of appeals, and the state supreme court. The judicial branch also includes 22 judicial districts, where all criminal cases are heard if a defendant is charged with a felony violation of state law.

WHO IS ELECTED**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES****WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU**

District Attorney (DA): Elected by members of the district, the DA prosecutes all felonies, misdemeanors, and serious traffic offenses.

- Screens, files, and prosecutes all criminal cases.
- Has discretion about which cases to pursue and how to pursue them.



Decides what to charge when prosecuting cases, from domestic violence to drugs.



Decides if cases should be referred to drug court or an alternative sentencing program that includes supervision and treatment.



Decides whether a crime should be charged as a hate crime.

**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.

BALLOT MEASURES AND STRONG FAMILIES

Colorado has had the initiative and referenda process for more than 100 years. And each election cycle, ballot measures are approved or rejected that can have a significant impact on our families and communities. Because ballot measures are often confusingly worded, it can be hard to tell what you are voting for or against. We wanted to highlight one measure that is of particular concern to our families:

MEASURE	WHAT IT DOES	DOES IT SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES?	WE URGE YOU TO:
#67 Protection of Pregnant Mothers and Their Unborn Children	Amends the Colorado Constitution to include unborn children in the definition of "person" in the criminal code.	This measure sounds like it protects families, but changing the criminal code in this way creates a new way to punish pregnant people. Laws like this have been used in other states to punish people for their choices while pregnant even when there was no harm to infants.	VOTE NO





THE ELEPHANT CIRCLE

supports strong people during vulnerable times. Our current projects include work on the childbirth system in Colorado and the Incarcerated Survivors Initiating Social Change group at Denver Women's Correctional Facility. The Elephant Circle is a member of Strong Families.

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, contact The Elephant Circle at elephantcircle.net

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