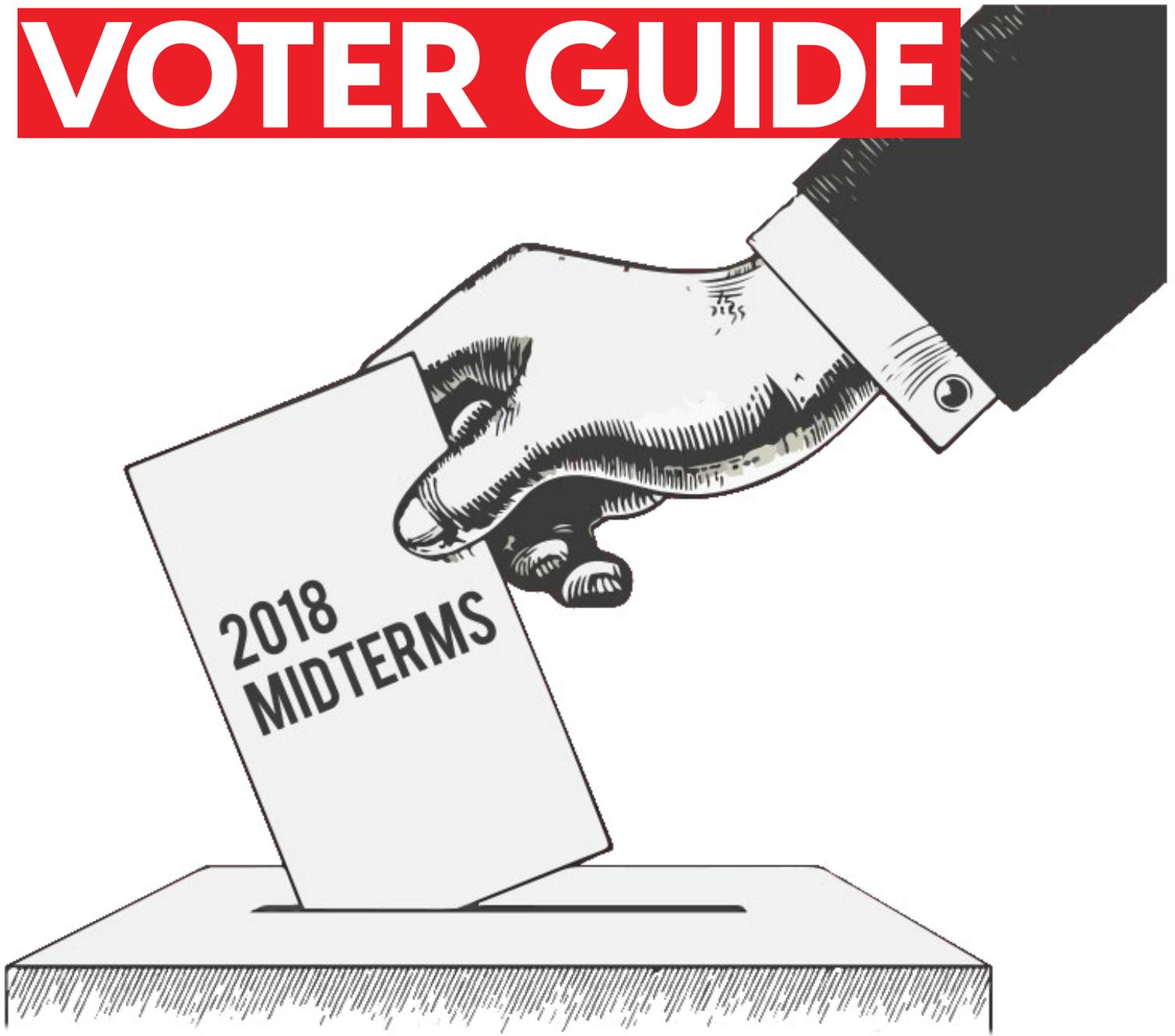


DENVER DSA

VOTER GUIDE



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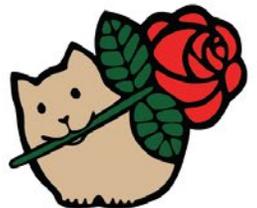


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CALL OUTS

While our chapter has elected to take a “No” stance on multiple ballot items, we have found a couple of proposals to be particularly threatening to our rights to exercise democratic control over our politics.

AMENDMENT 74: The Compensation to Owners for Decreased Property Value Due to State Regulation Initiative

Our Recommendation: **HELL NO**

At a time when voters are increasingly concerned about the impact oil and gas is having on our neighborhoods, our health, our environment, and even life on Earth itself with the threat from climate change, Amendment 74 is a direct reaction by wealthy capitalist interests to threaten our communities with bankruptcy if we regulate them. Indeed, most of the money backing this measure is coming from “Protect Colorado,” an oil and gas political group. The consequences extend far beyond oil and gas: the vague language has the potential to hold taxpayers liable for even the most common, everyday zoning regulations. Amendment 74 opens the door for “private property owners” to be able to sue over regulations ranging from stopping a marijuana store next to a school to a chemical plant next to our parks based on the claim that their property value was impacted. Also, it doesn’t just apply to new laws. This amendment is retroactive, so it applies to existing laws too. That means any law in existence which prevents a corporation from making more money (like the recent city council ban on slot homes, or an affordable housing unit in your neighborhood) is subject to a lawsuit. If you’re thinking, “How could anything this insane have made it on the ballot?”, welcome! Everyone else is thinking the same thing.

We also think this occasion is a good time to heighten awareness that calls to defend private property rights are often just calls to defend the rich:

[See the Jacobin’s piece on how private property means power over others.](#)

REFERRED MEASURE 2B: Charter amendment to change rules about the number of signatures required to get a proposed ballot initiative onto the city’s ballot

Our Recommendation: **NO WAY**

2B would change the number of valid signatures required to place an initiative or referendum on the ballot from a percentage of votes cast for Mayor (i.e. likely voters) in the last election to a percentage of active registered voters in Denver. This will result in an increase in the number of signatures needed, which will impact truly grassroots organizations that can’t hire professional signature collectors. This will also lengthen the amount of time during which City Council and the City Attorney must conduct review and comment for proposed initiatives, which is simply an attached delay mechanism. We see no justifiable reason to change a local process that has worked, and we also find it highly suspicious this is being pushed after a grassroots effort to win green roofs in Denver won last election—in the face of opposition from Mayor Hancock and capitalist developer interests. It’s also alarming that this is being proposed at a dangerous time for our communities and our democratic rights.

SALES TAX

Denver voters are facing four separate requests for regressive sales taxes on this November's ballot:

Question 300

Question 301

Question 302

Proposition 110

Sales taxes hit low-income residents the hardest since they spend a higher percentage of their total earnings than higher income families. While individual measures are being defended as “they only cost...,” the total cost of all four of these is a significant hit to residents struggling with the affordability crisis in this city.

This is against our values as Denver DSA, and we are taking a hard stance against all sales tax measures on the ballot this November.

Our alternative is clear: Tax the Rich!

PROPOSITION 110: “Let’s Go Colorado” Transportation Bond & Sales Tax Increase Initiative

Our Recommendation: **NO**

We fully agree with the Boulder DSA statement that Prop 110 is a regressive tax and a bad proposal:

“It is funded through a regressive sales tax; the majority of the money raised goes to unsustainable highway expansion and maintenance; money going into local city funds can be used in harmful public-private partnerships; and the amount of funding for public transit is unacceptably low. We support constructing a transportation network which is not reliant on fossil fuels, depends primarily on mass transit, and does not have a history of destroying city centers and minority neighborhoods as the American highway system does.”

MEH.

There are several measures on the ballot which we felt did not necessarily require a socialist perspective, thus our recommendation of 'meh'. These are:

Amendment W

Amendment X

Amendment Y

Amendment Z

Although these measures may still be important, we as Denver DSA have decided to remain neutral.

THE REST

AMENDMENT 73: Establish Income Tax Brackets and Raise Taxes for Education Initiative

Our Recommendation: YES

This does two things we strongly support: 1) funds our schools; 2) takes a swipe at TABOR, a reactionary measure that has eroded the quality of services in our state, by implementing a progressive income tax. Those making less than \$150,000 per year would see no changes to their income tax rate and would continue to be taxed at the current tax rate of 4.63 percent. This is also at a crucial time when many CO school districts have been forced to move to 4-day weeks due to lack of funds.

AMENDMENT V: The Reduced Age Qualification for General Assembly Members Amendment

Our Recommendation: YES

This amendment would lower the required age to serve in the Colorado General Assembly as a representative or senator from age 25 to 21. A 21-year-old is an adult under the law and may bring more diverse perspectives to a government that could use it. We say lower the age and allow the people to decide whether or not these younger candidates should be in office. We also stand with our Boulder DSA comrades in saying we wish this Amendment would have gone further by utilizing gender neutral language which recognizes multiples expressions of gender.

AMENDMENT 75: The Campaign Contribution Limits Initiative

Our Recommendation: NO

Under this amendment, a candidate directing over 1 million dollars to their campaign will then be allowed to accept aggregated contributions in the primary and general election at five times the currently authorized rate. This measure, which was sponsored by two right-wing legislators, does nothing to restrain campaign spending, and only helps wealthy candidates inject more money into our political races. The marketing of this as a “campaign contribution limits initiative” is misleading.

PROPOSITION 109: “Fix Our Damn Roads” Transportation Bond Initiative

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Our Recommendation: NO

This initiative is sponsored by the Independence Institute and snake oil salesman Jon Caldera. The Independence Institute has a record for endorsing many disastrous ideas such as privatizing our schools, declaring war on our teachers, the promotion of fossil fuels, and TABOR, which is why our roads are in such bad condition to begin with. Not only will borrowing \$3.5 billion for Proposition 109 fail to fund the \$9 billion project list by CDOT, it would require repayment from the state’s general fund, which means the cuts will come from health and education since lawmakers are legally limited on what they can cut. The “no new taxes” slogan being used to sell this idea is highly misleading at best.

AMENDMENT A: Abolish Slavery from the Colorado State Constitution

Our Recommendation: YES, YES, YES

This initiative would change Article 2, Section 26 of the Colorado State Constitution. It currently states: “There shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime.” Amendment A changes this to: “There shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude.” Period.

This change is important because it establishes the legal framework at the state level to begin challenging the State’s use of prison labor to benefit private corporations. We contend that this constitutes slavery, as the prisoners are compelled to work by force and are not properly compensated for their labor. In addition, corporate demand for cheap labor creates perverse financial incentives that encourage mass incarceration and contribute to higher sentencing, as well as corporate resistance to criminal justice reform.

PROPOSITION 111: A cap on payday loan interest rates

Our Recommendation: ABSOLUTELY YES

Predatory payday lenders target poor communities and communities of color with easy, immediate loans that only require you to have a job to acquire. Unfortunately, these loans can have annual interest rates and fees of up to 200% hidden in the fine print. Taking out a small loan can mean paying more than double that amount in interest, and people are often forced to take out another payday loan in order to pay for the first. This trap ensnares millions of people in a cycle of debt, and what’s worse is that these predatory debt cycles are the thing that actually makes the industry profitable. Proposition 111 caps the interest rates on payday loans at 36%. While this may still sound high, the good news is that when other states attempted a similar cap the industry packed up and left the state—meaning, if they can’t trap people in debilitating debt, it’s not actually worth the cost. We think that’s a win for society.

PROPOSITION 112: 2,500 foot setback on oil and gas extraction away from homes and schools

Our Recommendation: **SMASH THAT MOTHERLOVIN YES BUTTON**

The negative health effects from fracking are numerous and well-documented, and they are almost always visited upon the most vulnerable among us. While this legislation is far from enough to protect our communities from the rapacious oil and gas industry—and it is vulnerable to being overturned by the legislature—it is a vital step in the right direction. The fact that it would result in a significant loss of revenue for oil and gas is an added bonus.

QUESTION 2E: The Democracy for the People Initiative

Our Recommendation: **YES**

The Democracy for the People Initiative will accomplish several things: it will ban contributions from corporations directly to candidates, decrease contribution limits, and create a small donor matching program that will amplify the contributions of Denver residents to campaigns. We strongly support this initiative as a step towards limiting capital's ability to buy elections. While corporate interests will still find plenty of ways to tilt Denver elections in their favor, the Democracy for the People Initiative would make it substantially easier for progressive, anti-capitalist, and working-class candidates to run for office and win.

QUESTION 2C: Police Department Hires

Our Recommendation: **NO**

This measure would make it easier for the Denver Police Department to hire “lateral recruits,” or police officers who move to the department from other jurisdictions. Denver DSA condemns the practices of the Denver Police Department in protecting the interests of property and white supremacy while oppressing people of color and the homeless, and we reject any measure that would allow Denver PD to make more arrests or expand their role in our city.

QUESTION 7G: Urban Drainage Property Tax

Our Recommendation: YES

Ballot Issue 7G is asking to restore a mill levy to the statutory cap set by the legislature at 1 million. The Flood Control District has taken a sizable funding hit over the years due to TABOR. Some of the things the district does is design flood warning systems, assess land use problems in flood plains, and remove garbage/debris from our streams, creeks, and rivers. The District also provides other benefits such as open spaces and trails for recreation in low-lying areas that would be unwise for growth.

Given that we are living through a period of climate change unprecedented in human history, which has brought severe rain and flooding, and coupled with rapid urban development and sprawl, studying flooding and being proactive in preventing damage and mitigating risk are necessary actions. The mechanism by which the flood control district calls for funding is through a property tax (of less than \$2/yr per \$100k of property value).

QUESTION 2A: Parks Tax

Our Recommendation: NO

While increased investment in Denver parks is commendable, funding their construction and maintenance through a regressive sales tax is a deal-breaker. Sales taxes place the greatest proportion of the burden on the working and lower classes, while the rich (who will benefit the most from more green space) are allowed to skirt their responsibilities. It is no coincidence that the support for this measure comes from massive real estate and construction firms, who see this as a way to increase their property values by extracting wealth from the general population. A more appropriate way of funding this, which is already common, is to raise developer fees to have developers compensate for their impact.

Some other points of concern raised have been voters already approved a parks and recreation bond issue in 2017, and we question why our city officials are prioritizing this issue when we face more pressing matters such as the affordable housing crisis.