

League of Women Voters of Denver Education Fund

NOVEMBER 1, 2005 ELECTION

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE VOTING FOR

DENVER BALLOT ISSUES

3A Denver Public Schools Teacher Compensation Plan [Referred Issue]

Funding for professional compensation system for teachers, called ProComp for short. Increases the mill levy on property so that there is an additional \$25 million for Denver Public Schools in the first year. Subsequently, amount will be adjusted for inflation based on the consumer price index.

Background : The traditional system of adjusting teacher compensation is based on years in the system and additional credits of post-graduate training. ProComp instead rewards results. Four categories that will increase a teacher's compensation are raising student achievement, teaching difficult subjects, working in hard-to-staff schools, and improving teaching knowledge and skills. The system was designed by teams that included administrators and teachers in equal numbers. It is the most extensive merit based pay system ever proposed for a large American school district. Initially, the added taxes will amount to \$24 per year for every \$100,000 in residential property value. A person whose home has a value of \$300,000 will pay \$72 more in taxes if ProComp is approved by the voters.

Those in favor say:

- ProComp will increase compensation for teachers who perform well. The current formula does not allow for the quality of a teacher's work.
- Teachers who choose challenging schools or teach subject areas that are hard to fill should be paid more than those who have easier assignments. Without this flexibility, demand exceeds supply for some positions, and the students are not well taught.
- Denver teacher salaries are lower than those in suburban districts, though their work is equally hard or harder. ProComp helps remedy that imbalance.

Those opposed say:

- Government schools are inherently less efficient than private schools. Giving them more funds will not produce a better result.
- Merit pay for teachers is an ideal that will break on the reality of favoritism when administrators have power to judge a teacher's work.
- Adjusting for inflation is unnecessary. 25 million dollars is more than will be needed for the first several years of ProComp.

1A Lodger's Tax [Referred Question]

Increases Denver's hotel tax by 1%, from 9.75% to 10.75%. Funds would be used only to promote the city as a tourism and convention destination. Tax rate will decline to 9% when 1989 and 1999 Convention Center bonds are paid off. Also removes constitutional spending (TABOR) limitations from the revenue generated by the added 1%. Companion ordinance will send funds to Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau for marketing efforts.

Those in favor say:

- This tax will provide about \$4 million a year to promote Denver and increase the number of visitors to our city. With adequate marketing, Denver can increase return on its investments in facilities to serve visitors.
- Each dollar spent on advertising leads to \$8 - \$10 in tourist spending, which is a very good return on investment
- Denver will not be too costly with the added tax. It will move from 54th to 53rd in hotel costs, and remain at 30th among cities of similar size.
- Because this is a small tax on hotel rooms (only \$1 more on a \$100 room), the vast majority of Denver residents will not pay the tax -- but our entire community will enjoy the benefits of a stronger tourism economy.

Those opposed say:

- Increasing taxes will not attract additional visitors. Tourists will choose to visit less expensive places. Competition for conventions increases every year.
- Marketing is not an appropriate way to spend tax revenues. The Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau should use its budget more effectively, or raise funds from the private sector.
- 10.75% is too high a tax whether it is paid by Denver residents or only by visitors.

1B Retention of Local Revenues [Referred Question]

Allows Denver to keep and spend all tax revenues in fiscal years 2005 - 2014, removing the constitutional spending (TABOR) limits for that time period. Also changes the calculation of the revenue cap for year 2015 and later. The highest single revenue year of 2005 - 2014 becomes the new base revenue number to which inflation and growth adjustments are applied. The state constitutional limit on property tax revenues and the city tax rates do not change. Revenue retention for years 2000 through 2004 was approved by Denver voters in 2000.

Those in favor say :

- Denver has cut city staff and services because revenues declined. If funds increase in 2005 and later, it is important to restore services to the people of Denver.
- The revenues will be spent on essential services such as public safety, public works, health care, parks and recreation, and libraries.
- This change eliminates the long term negative effect of a single year in which taxes collected decline greatly. That year will not affect the revenue cap.
- Tax rates do not increase if measure is approved.

Those opposed say :

- Shrinking the size of Denver government was a good change. Some services were not necessary and others were provided in a very inefficient way.
- Individuals make better spending choices than government does. It is better to retain the old formula and send more money back to the taxpayers.
- Removing the Constitutional spending limits for ten years is too long a period.

1C City Council Powers and Duties [Referred Charter Amendment]

Amends several sections of the Denver Charter. Broadens City Council responsibility to approve contracts and agreements with other governments. Allows Council to act by resolution as well as by ordinance in more cases. Streamlines Charter by removing detail.

Those in favor say :

- Some actions by City Council are routine and not controversial. Making those decisions by resolution is faster and simpler than the process of enacting an ordinance.
- Council's meeting schedule should be decided annually, not set in the Denver City Charter.
- Most of these changes just take unnecessary detail out of the City Charter.

There is no organized opposition.

100 Alcohol-Marijuana Equalization [Initiated Ordinance]

Amends the Denver Municipal Code to make it legal for persons 21 and older to possess or use in private one ounce of marijuana or less.

Those in favor say :

- Marijuana is undoubtedly less harmful than alcohol. It doesn't make sense that Denver laws prohibit the private use of marijuana by adults while allowing and encouraging widespread use of alcohol.
- Alcohol use is associated with domestic violence, sexual assaults, and other acts of violence. The use of marijuana has not been shown to cause violent behavior and has never caused an overdose death.
- If adopted, the use and possession of marijuana by people under 21 years of age, use of marijuana in public and driving under the influence of marijuana will remain criminal offenses.

Those opposed say :

- Possession of one ounce or less of marijuana is a Class 2 petty offense under Colorado law. This question will not change that. Denver law should match Colorado law.
- Marijuana is dangerous in itself, and can lead to using using lethal drugs.

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