

Selection of Presidential Electors

1 The proposed amendment to the Colorado Constitution:

- 2 ♦ eliminates the current system in which the presidential candidate receiving the
3 most votes gets all of the state's electoral votes;
- 4 ♦ allocates Colorado's electoral votes based on the percentage of votes for each
5 presidential candidate; and
- 6 ♦ makes the changes effective for the November 2004 presidential election.

7 Background

8 In the United States, the president and vice president are elected using a system
9 called the electoral college. Under this system, each state is allotted electoral votes equal
10 to the number of the state's representatives and senators in the U.S. Congress. The
11 electoral college currently consists of 538 electors from all 50 states and the District of
12 Columbia. Colorado has nine of these electors. In all but two states, the candidate who
13 gets the most votes receives all of the state's electoral votes. A candidate must receive
14 at least 270 electoral votes to win the presidency. If no candidate obtains a majority of
15 electoral votes, the presidency is decided by the U.S. House of Representatives, with
16 each state allotted one vote.

17 In Colorado, each political party designates nine electors. Electors pledge to
18 support that party's candidate for president and vice president. After each presidential
19 election, electors from the winning party meet at the State Capitol to cast their vote for
20 president and for vice president. All 50 states have a similar process for choosing
21 electors.

22 Under this proposal, beginning with the November 2004 election, Colorado
23 would allocate its electoral votes according to the percentage of ballots cast for each
24 presidential ticket. Electoral votes would be divided, in whole numbers, among the
25 competing candidates according to the number of votes each candidate receives. For
26 example, if candidate Smith gets 55 percent of the votes and candidate Jones gets 45
27 percent, then Smith would receive five electoral votes and Jones would receive four.

28 The proposal also adds procedures and timelines to the state constitution for
29 certifying election results and recounts related to the vote on this proposal.

1 **Arguments For**

2 1) This proposal makes Colorado's electoral vote more accurately reflect the
3 statewide vote. Under the current winner-take-all system one candidate automatically
4 gets all of the state's electoral votes, even if he or she doesn't win a majority of votes on
5 election day. Instead, Colorado's electoral votes should reflect all candidates that have
6 widespread support, not just the candidate that gets as little as one more vote than
7 another.

8 2) This proposal may motivate more people to vote since the votes of more
9 Coloradans will be represented in the electoral college. Under the current system,
10 eligible citizens may not bother to participate in elections if they believe that their vote
11 will have no impact on the outcome, especially independent voters not affiliated with one
12 of the two major political parties. The proposal may also encourage greater participation
13 by minor-party candidates who could be more likely to receive electoral votes.

14 **Arguments Against**

15 1) Capturing all of the state's electoral votes will be more difficult under the
16 proposal, making Colorado less influential in presidential elections. The current system
17 rewards the most popular candidate and encourages candidates to campaign in the state
18 on issues of importance to Coloradans. In contrast, the proposal reduces the incentive
19 to campaign in Colorado when a candidate might only pick up one or two additional
20 electoral votes.

21 2) By making it easier for minor-party candidates to win electoral votes in
22 Colorado, the proposal could lead to a situation where no candidate wins a majority of
23 the electoral vote nationally. If this happens, the presidency would be determined by the
24 U.S. House of Representatives with each state getting only one vote. This results in
25 smaller states having disproportionate power and further weakens the popular vote by
26 increasing the chance that the U.S. Congress, not the public, will elect the president.

27 **Estimate of Fiscal Impact**

28 This proposal does not significantly affect state or local expenditures.