



## COLORADO LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

**POSITION:  
SUPPORT SB09-287**

**TO:** Colorado General Assembly  
**FROM:** Melanie Layton, Jim Cole & Garin Vorthmann  
**CLIENT:** Special Olympics Colorado  
**RE:** SB09-287— CONCERNING THE VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION DESIGNATION BENEFITING THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS COLORADO FUND THAT APPEARS ON THE STATE INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX RETURN FORMS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, EXTENDING THE PERIOD FOR THE CONTRIBUTION DESIGNATION.

**SPONSORS:** Senator Shawn Mitchell and Rep. Claire Levy  
**DATE:** April 22, 2009

### SB09-287 BILL SUMMARY:

SB09-287 extends the period for which state income tax return forms shall include a line whereby individual taxpayers may make a voluntary contribution to the Special Olympics Colorado fund.

### WHY THE BILL IS NEEDED:

The original law was enacted in 1997 and has been extended every three years after that. SOCO receives approximately \$150,000 a year from the Checkoff that funds such things as Special Olympics competition, training, facilities, uniforms and equipment.

### BACKGROUND ON SPECIAL OLYMPICS COLORADO:

- **Mission**—The mission of Special Olympics Colorado (SOCO) is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.
- **History and Organizational Structure**—What started as a day camp in Eunice Kennedy Shriver's backyard in the late '60's has grown to become the largest program of its kind. The Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation incorporated Special Olympics in 1968. In February 1988, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the umbrella organization of the Olympic movement, officially recognized Special Olympics. Today, this international program serves over **2.25 million athletes in more than 160 countries**. Every other year, Special Olympics brings the world together to compete in international-level games.

SOCO, authorized and accredited by Special Olympics, Inc., held its first event at Aurora Hinkley High School in 1969. Four hundred athletes participated in a one-day track and field meet. **Today, Special Olympics Colorado serves over 10,000 athletes across the state.** Colorado is organized into five geographic areas that are each served by a SOCO Area Manager. A local program, under the leadership of a volunteer program coordinator and key volunteers, directly serve athletes.

- **Funding**—Special Olympics Colorado is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization supported entirely by private donations from individuals, corporations, and organizations throughout the state. **The program does not receive any financial assistance from the government, United Way or Kennedy Foundation.**

- **Athlete Participation**—All athletes are required to obtain medical clearance in order to participate in Special Olympics Colorado. Athletes develop fitness and sports skills, as well as learn rules and strategies from their volunteer coaches. Special Olympics also trains volunteers and certifies coaches, officials and games committee members to ensure that all athletes receive the highest quality training and competition. At competitions, athletes are placed into divisions based on age, gender and ability. Competitions take place at area, state, national and international levels.
- **Unified Sports®**—The Unified Sports® program combines an equal number of Special Olympics athletes with their non-disabled peers (partners) on sports teams helping to break down barriers that have historically kept people with and without intellectual disabilities apart. SOCO's program includes Unified Sports® event opportunities in all 20 sports. There are nearly 1,000 partners registered in the program. Because of the program, Special Olympics Colorado is truly a sports program for individuals of any ability.
- **Volunteers**—Each year SOCO relies on a volunteer force of over 6,000 people. Volunteers serve at all levels in the program and in many capacities, including coaches, sports officials and committee members. SOCO can match the interest and need of individuals, groups and corporations within the volunteer opportunities for all area and state competitions and special events.
- **Statewide Events**—Special Olympics Colorado hosts four events—Winter Games, State Basketball Tournament, Summer Games and the Fall Classic. Special Olympics, Inc. hosts World Games which take place every other year. Just last month, Boise, Idaho, was the host of the 2009 World Winter Games. Two Colorado athletes—Brydie Charles and Josh Reynolds—collected gold in snowshoeing. Athens, Greece will be the site of the 2011 World Summer Games.
- **Competition**—Special Olympics Colorado is divided into five areas with one state office and three satellite offices. SOCO offers a year-round program, hosting close to 80 competitions annually on area and state levels. Event divisions are based on age, gender and ability level to give all athletes an equal chance. Every athlete receives a medal or ribbon following a competition.

**Please Support SB09-287 !**