

## Referendum L Qualifications for Serving in the State Legislature

1 **Referendum L proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to:**

- 2     ◆ lower the age requirement for serving in the state legislature from 25 to  
3     21.

### 4 **Summary and Analysis**

5     ***Requirements for serving in the state legislature.*** The state constitution  
6 requires that a representative or senator in the state legislature be at least 25 years  
7 old, be a United States citizen, and reside in the district from which he or she is  
8 elected for at least twelve months prior to being elected. Referendum L lowers the  
9 age requirement to 21. The existing age requirement has been in the state  
10 constitution, unchanged, since 1876.

11     ***Comparison of state age requirements.*** All 50 states have age requirements for  
12 members of their state legislatures, ranging from 18 to 30 years old. Three states,  
13 including Colorado, require that members of the House of Representatives be at least  
14 25 years old. The remaining states have a lower age requirement for the House of  
15 Representatives. Twenty-six states, including Colorado, require that members of the  
16 Senate be at least 25 years old, with seven of those states having an even higher age  
17 requirement.

### 18 **Arguments For**

19     1) Excluding 21- to 24-year-olds from seeking election to the state legislature is  
20 an unnecessary restriction. A 21-year-old is considered an adult under the law.  
21 Voters can judge whether a candidate possesses the maturity, ability, and  
22 competence to hold political office without regard to age.

23     2) Allowing 21-year-olds to run for office encourages civic engagement of young  
24 people. By opening access to the ballot to a wider group of potential legislative  
25 candidates, young candidates and their supporters can offer a new and different  
26 perspective on issues that come before the state legislature. Additionally, young  
27 legislators can encourage legislative debate on and elevate issues important to young  
28 adults.

### 29 **Arguments Against**

30     1) Younger candidates may lack the maturity and real-world experience to be  
31 effective legislators. The policy decisions and political pressures that legislators face

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1 are best handled by people with more life experience. Lack of experience could  
2 hinder a young legislator's ability to represent a constituency effectively.

3 2) The current age requirement strikes an appropriate balance between youth  
4 and experience. It has been the standard for Colorado since the enactment of the  
5 state constitution. Further, it aligns with the age requirement for service in the United  
6 States House of Representatives and many other state senates.

## 7 **Estimate of Fiscal Impact**

8 Referendum L is not expected to affect state or local government revenues or  
9 spending.