

**Referendum L
Qualifications for Serving in State Legislature**

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

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

4 **Summary and Analysis**

5 ***Requirements for service 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 legislature, 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 other 47 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. Voters
21 can judge whether a candidate possesses the maturity, ability, and competence to
22 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 elevate and encourage legislative debate on 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. Legislators encounter policy decisions and political pressures

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

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

8 **Estimate of Fiscal Impact**

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