

Amendment Q Temporary Location for the State Seat of Government

1 **Amendment Q proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to:**

- 2 ♦ establish a process for moving the state seat of government to a
3 temporary location during a declared disaster emergency.

4 **Summary and Analysis**

5 Since statehood, the Colorado Constitution has designated Denver as the state
6 seat of government. The legislature is prohibited from moving the seat of government
7 out of Denver unless it refers a constitutional amendment to the voters at a general
8 election. The state constitution requires that an amendment to move the state seat of
9 government be approved by at least two-thirds of those voting on the issue.

10 Amendment Q creates a process for temporarily moving the seat of government if
11 a disaster emergency affects the ability of state government to operate in Denver. It
12 defines a disaster emergency as the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or
13 severe damage, injury, illness, or loss of life or property resulting from an epidemic or
14 a natural, man-made, or technological event. For the purpose of addressing such
15 emergencies, it also defines the seat of government as the location of the legislative,
16 executive, and judicial branches of the state of Colorado.

17 After declaring a disaster emergency, and after consulting with the Chief Justice
18 of the Colorado Supreme Court, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
19 House of Representatives, the Governor may designate a temporary meeting location
20 for the state legislature. The legislature must meet at that location and decide
21 whether to pass a bill designating a temporary location for the seat of government
22 outside of Denver. Such legislation must include a date when the temporary location
23 of the seat of government expires. Amendment Q does not change the process for
24 permanently moving the state seat of government. Currently, 36 other states have
25 created a legal process to temporarily move the state seat of government in an
26 emergency.

27 **Argument For**

28 1) The state constitution does not provide a process to temporarily relocate the
29 state seat of government — even during a disaster emergency. Amendment Q
30 provides the legal authority for the temporary movement of state government in the
31 event of a declared disaster emergency. It also enables state government officials to
32 plan for and respond to a disaster emergency and continue essential government
33 services without requiring a statewide vote on whether to move the state seat.

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1 **Argument Against**

2 1) The measure may be unnecessary because all three branches of state
3 government have powers under current law and rules to independently manage their
4 operations and address disaster emergencies. For example, legislative rules allow the
5 legislature to meet temporarily in another location in Denver or elsewhere in the state
6 during a Governor-declared disaster emergency. The Governor also has powers to
7 address disasters including ordering evacuations and reassigning state employees.

8 **Estimate of Fiscal Impact**

9 Amendment Q is not expected to affect state or local government revenue or
10 spending.