



The Bell Action Network is the advocacy and organizing arm of the Bell Policy Center, which is committed to making Colorado a “state of opportunity” for all. The Network, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization, promotes progressive social change in Colorado by supporting public policies that create a real and lasting increase in opportunity for individuals and families.

## TABOR and PUBLIC SERVICES

### HIGHER EDUCATION

- In constant dollars, state general fund appropriations for higher education have reached their lowest level in over 20 years. Over the past four years, the Department of Higher Education saw a decrease of 21.3 percent in state funding – the largest decrease among all areas of the state budget.
- Colorado ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the amount of state tax funds devoted to higher education, as a proportion of total state personal income.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- From 2002 to 2005, reductions in state funding to our public colleges and universities totaled \$149.4 million, financial aid support was reduced \$9.1 million, state subsidies to local district colleges fell \$3.6 million, and \$3.0 million was eliminated from state support for area vocational schools.
- Community colleges received only partial funding for enrollment growth in 2003 and no increase in enrollment funding in 2004 and 2005. At the same time, total enrollment grew more than 10 percent. This equals more than 11,000 unfunded students in the system by 2006. The majority of funding (52 percent) for colleges now consist of cash funds (tuition and fees) — up from 40 percent five years ago. As a result, total state support has declined to nearly the same level it was in 1998.

### TRANSPORTATION

- Colorado spends far less than other states to maintain its transportation infrastructure, ranking 44<sup>th</sup> based on spending per mile of highway in poor condition.
- The Department of Transportation estimates an extra \$1.6 billion a year is needed to cope with the state’s crumbling bridges, jammed highways and decaying roads. Without additional funding, the backlog of necessary transportation improvement projects will total \$12.6 billion by 2010.

### MEDICAID

- In 2002, Colorado ranked 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation for total federal and state Medicaid spending. The proportion of low-income individuals enrolled in Colorado’s Medicaid program is lower than in all but five other states.

### HEALTHCARE

- Colorado’s national ranking for access to prenatal care dropped sharply from 23<sup>rd</sup> in 1990 to 48<sup>th</sup> in 2004. Only 67 percent of Colorado women receive adequate care, compared to the national average of 76 percent.
- The 2002 National Immunization Survey found Colorado to be 50<sup>th</sup> among all states in on-time child immunization rates. In 1995, the state’s vaccination rate was well above the national average.

### MENTAL HEALTH

- In 2001, even before recent cutbacks, Colorado ranked 31<sup>st</sup> nationally for publicly funded mental health care. We spent just over \$64 per capita — 21 percent below the national average of \$81 per person.
- Colorado ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in per capita spending on substance abuse and treatment programs. Yet it is first in the nation for cocaine use, fourth in use of any illegal drug, first for any drug other than marijuana, and eighth for marijuana use alone.

## **LIBRARIES**

- Libraries across the state are being forced to cut public service hours and staffing at a time when Coloradans use libraries in huge numbers. Since June 2002, state funding for libraries has been cut more than 79 percent.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

- Each year from 1992 to 2002, per capita total appropriations for the Department of Public Health and Environment declined 0.16 percent. For more than 10 years, no additional funding has been provided to cope with the state's population increase or to combat new health threats, such as the West Nile virus
- In 2004, Colorado ranked 37<sup>th</sup> lowest in the nation in spending per capita for public health.

## **JUDICIAL**

- Between 2003 and 2004, nearly 100 court employees were laid off and another 290 position left vacant. The state's justice system is now understaffed by 17 percent and is ill-equipped to handle a case load that grows almost 7 percent a year. Currently, probation officers are responsible for an average of 217 adult offenders, well above the national average of 130.
- Courthouses and clerk's offices have reduced operating hours, resulting in slower responses to inquiries, longer waits for service, lack of support for judges, and increased data entry errors. Hearings that are required by law to occur within two days of filing routinely take 30 days.

## **AGRICULTURE**

- In 2002, the state cut Colorado State University's budget for the Agricultural Extension Service by more than \$1.6 million. In January of 2005, the Extension Service announced it would begin charging fees for such popular programs as statewide 4-H clubs, Master Gardener accreditation and agricultural technical assistance for ranchers and farmers.
- Before 2002, the state contributed funds to help farmers with the cost of agricultural product inspection fees. After the state cut support, local farmers now shoulder the entire cost of these public safety inspections. For many agricultural producers these inspection fees have increased an average of 500 percent.

## **STATE PARKS**

- Between 2001 and 2005, the percentage of park operating costs covered by the state's general fund fell 37 percent. This amounted to a reduction of \$1.2 million in funding and the elimination of 26 full-time positions.
- If state funding for parks had kept up with inflation and population growth over the last two years, Colorado's parks would have received \$2.3 million (45 percent) more than was appropriated in 2004.

## **COLORADO'S ECONOMY**

- Over 56 percent of business leaders feel that the state's fiscal situation is critical or very critical. They also feel that funding is at a critical or very critical point for higher education (70 percent) and transportation (56 percent).
- The Corporation for Economic Development's index of the state's economic development prospects awarded Colorado a C grade for its performance in 2004. This was the second year in a row the state dropped a full letter grade. Colorado's poor scores in development capacity reflect the state's national rankings as 44<sup>th</sup> in K-12 expenditures, 46<sup>th</sup> in high school completion rate, 36<sup>th</sup> in average teacher salary, and 41<sup>st</sup> in highway maintenance.

## **ART AND CULTURE**

- Between 2002 and 2004, the Colorado Council on the Art's total General Fund appropriation fell from \$1.9 million to just \$100,000. Colorado ranked second in the nation for the severity of budget cuts to the arts during the national recession. In 2001, with appropriations of over \$1 million, Colorado still ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in per capita funding for state art agencies. The Council supports arts and culture programming in communities around the state that help support local economies and attract visitors.