

*Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.*  
*-Ruth Bader Ginsberg*

Dear friends,

Each election year I compile my opinions about issues and candidates. And each year my disclaimer is the same: there is no substitute for doing your own research on issues and candidates! My intent is to add to the dialogue with my research, which some of you have asked me to share with you. I'd love to hear your thoughts on any of the candidates and ballot measures! Full disclosure: I am a Democrat and am working to get Democrats elected up and down the ticket.

Sources for this research include the Colorado State Ballot Info Booklet (blue book,) endorsements from the Denver Post, Colorado Sun, and Durango Herald; environmental groups such as League of Conservation Voters, Conservation Colorado, and The Conservation Alliance; women's rights groups, and the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights.

Ballots were mailed starting October 9th. Every voter should have a ballot in hand by Oct 16th. Be sure to place your ballot in the secrecy envelope and put that inside the mailing envelope. And be sure to sign the outside of the envelope.

Ballot drop-boxes are the best way to return a ballot and avoid the postal service (direct line to the County Clerk; no stamp needed and no delays!) Ballot drop-boxes in San Miguel County can be found: in Telluride under the stairs at the Miramonte Building 333 Colorado Ave, in Norwood at the Glockson Building on Summit St, downvalley at Placerville School House.

If you do mail your ballot, the San Miguel County Clerk says that it will cost 65 cents to mail it, so USE TWO STAMPS. Be sure to leave plenty of time for the ballot to be received at the clerk's office no later than November 3rd!

Or you may vote in person starting October 19th. The polling places are open as follows: In Telluride at the SMC annex, next door to the thrift store on Main St, M-F Oct 19-Nov 2, 8:30 am-4:30 pm, and Saturday 10/31 10am-2pm, and election day till 7pm. In Norwood at the Glockson Building on Summit St. only open ON ELECTION DAY, 7am-7pm.

[Here is](#) your one-stop spot for all voter information, such as where you can find voting locations and dates, locations of ballot drop-boxes, check your voter registration, and learn about the three ways to vote in Colorado (by mail, by dropbox, and in person.) [This Colorado Sun article](#) also has a lot of good voter information, including what Coronavirus protocols are in place for voting.

I know we often hear that this is the most important election of our lives, and this year clearly and accurately raises that statement to a new level of urgency! On the line is your health care, our environment, this planet, women's rights, immigrant rights, droves of human lives, international diplomacy, compassion, and US democracy!

Imagine a better future. And please vote!

Yours, Joan

### **Candidates**

What does this say about our country? The president won't debate (either he uses the opportunity to bully and interrupt, or he outright refuses to debate), one of our CO senators, Cory Gardner [refuses](#) to answer questions (google: Cory Gardner refuses to answer questions and see the dozens of items that show up) and the Republican candidate for Colorado's 3rd Congressional District of the US Congress [stonewalls the press](#), and refuses to [debate](#) or answer questions. We must hold our candidates accountable, and we can do better, in every case.

### **US President**

**Biden** not Trump:

You already know that Biden has a plan for many important issues: finally leading our country toward controlling the spread of the COVID-19 virus, carbon reduction and environmental justice, medicare for all who want it, clean energy economy job creation, campaign finance and government reform, ending gun violence, defending women's rights, supporting Black Lives Matter, wage equity, tax equity, worker rights, improving education and housing, DEI, and 34 other stated policy plans.

And you know that Trump has no plan, no platform, no policy statements except to continue to irresponsibly shirk leadership on the pandemic, continue to annihilate the earth in the name of greed, commit unforgivable human-rights atrocities, widen the gap between the uber-wealthy and the rest of the country, increase the federal deficit by giving tax cuts to the wealthy, and destroy American values. This you already know.

You may think that your vote doesn't matter in an electoral college system, but ***it's important for every single eligible voter to make your voice heard so that there can be no mistake that America won't stand for hatred, racism, and tearing down our democracy. We need a landslide!***

Please remember that Colorado is still a swing state! Your vote matters!!

The 35 editors of the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) broke with 200 years of tradition of avoiding politics because of the gross mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic by stating: "Dangerous incompetent politicians must go."

### **US Senate**

### **Hickenlooper not Gardner**

Colorado needs Gardner out of here. He is nothing but a Trump loyalist through and through who stands for nothing discernible. He lies to us easily (“I think we’re too close to the election. The president who is elected in November should be the one who makes this decision.” and “I won’t do anything to stand in the way of the CORE act.”) Before he lies, he always hides, waiting for Trump to tell him how to vote.

But more important than that, America needs four seats to change for the Senate to turn from Republican to Democrat. Hickenlooper is a vitally important piece of that solution.

Republicans have supported Trump through four years of astonishing corruption. It’s hard to keep up with each onslaught of the constitution brought on by the current administration and the senate. Now that abortion and health care are squarely on the chopping block and Republicans have uniformly dismissed clear science on climate change and the pandemic, more than ever, we desperately need legislators who care more about human rights and the fate of the planet than about corporate greed and tax breaks for the mega-wealthy.

It’s long past time for legislators to create laws to allow women to be treated as equals—an Equal Rights Amendment—something the USA still does not have in 2020. This should be the new, Democrat Senate’s first campaign, along with immediately creating Medicare for all who want it, paid for with new taxes by those in the upper echelons who can afford to support the society they stand so firmly on the shoulders of. We can elect representatives who bring our country in line with every other developed country in the world, and adopt a green new deal and a plan to confront the pandemic similar to plans by every other modern nation in the world.

Hickenlooper has an awful record of supporting oil and gas development, but I’m not worried that he’ll bring back fossil fuels, because renewable energy is the future of our economy and oil and gas development is becoming obsolete for economic reasons. Yes, the state ethics commission found that he [violated Colorado’s gift ban](#) during two trips. He has paid the fines on those charges. The commission dismissed all other charges.

Hick will vote the right way on the senate on healthcare, immigrant rights, public land protection, climate change legislation, tax reform, wage equity, women’s rights, and all of the issues Democrats care about.

### **US Congress: 3rd Congressional District**

#### **Mitsch-Bush not Boebert**

Diane will fight hard for all the things you care about: equity, environment, healthcare, getting money out of politics, and more. Mitsch Bush has a very strong record of successfully working across the aisle, but also standing up against greed. I think she will be a VERY effective member of Congress. In the words of the Denver Post: “Diane Mitsch Bush has served Western Colorado honorably over the past 17 years, beginning her political career as a commissioner in Routt County before getting elected to the state House representing Routt and Eagle counties in 2013. She is ready and willing to listen to her constituents — be they Democrats, Republicans or independents — and she is transparent and open about her decision-making process.”

Lauren Boebert has never done a thing in any public capacity. She clearly has no knowledge of the constitution, except for her twisted interpretation of the second amendment, which is the one and only issue she cares about. (When Diane Mitsch Bush asked if Boebert thinks we need an

Equal Rights Amendment, Boebert replied: “We don’t need an equal rights amendment, we have the second amendment.”) If you want to learn about how easily Boebert lies, and about the times she’s been arrested, and the businesses she’s run to the ground, here’s a [factual expose](#). Or [this comparison](#) of the two candidates.

This race is surprisingly, and frighteningly close. (Fivethirtyeight.com lists it as the 6th most competitive race in the country.) We need every single vote for Diane!

### **Colorado State House of Representatives District 58**

**Seth Cagin** vs. Marc Catlin

Seth is running to “save democracy and our planet.” The 58th is solidly Republican, but let’s let all the Democrat voices be heard in this district! Maybe this will be the year we turn it around!

### **State Board of Education**

**Mayling Simpson** is a strong believer in the importance of free public education, which, she says, is “the foundation of our democracy and our nation’s biggest anti-poverty program.”

### **San Miguel County Commissioner**

All the sitting commissioners have been working double time during the pandemic, and we are so grateful for their dedication and hard work!

Both Kris Holstrom and Hilary Cooper are up for reelection this year. Neither of them have official opponents in this race. But Kris has a write-in opponent. Please do not leave that box unchecked, thinking that Kris is unopposed! Please vote for Kris Holstrom. She brings all the right qualities to the position of San Miguel County Commissioner: she is calm, compassionate, smart, fair, respectful and diligent. Her interest in the welfare of her constituents and the land we live on is apparent in how she votes. Read more about Kris on her [website](#).

### **Ouray County Commissioners**

I am hereby breaking my long-standing commitment to only endorse candidates and issues I get to vote on. I don’t live in Ouray County, and I respectfully defer to those of you who live the county issues day to day. There is a virtual debate of commissioner candidates Thursday, October 8th from 6:30-8:30 via [zoom](#).

But I do know two of the candidates, so I will share my experience:

### **Lynn Padgett**

Lynn Padgett is the most thorough commissioner I’ve ever worked with. She does her research and her homework. Her mission includes “being an ambassador for all of Ouray County, honoring the county’s master plan and land use code, promoting smart growth, and conducting business in an open and professional manner without favoritism.” She is smart and dedicated and deserves your vote.

### **Jake Niece**

I've worked with Jake on EcoAction Partners, and I've seen that he is a hard worker, willing to learn. He cares about the land, with a priority toward climate change solutions, in which he is well-versed. He will roll up his sleeves and I trust that he will listen to constituents.

**Judge Retention**—now we come to the part of the ballot that makes many citizens feel ill-equipped to vote! The blue book has some helpful information on this. I also found this great website that gives judicial reviews(<http://www.coloradojudicialperformance.gov/>) I've asked lawyer friends, and none so far have told me that any of these judges don't deserve retention. Those who responded to my query had particular praise for Judge Patrick. Remember, you don't have to fill out parts of the ballot that you are unsure about!

## **2020 Colorado Ballot Measures**

**Amendment 76** only a citizen of the us can vote

**NO.** Would remove the right of a citizen to participate in voting in a primary if they will turn 18 before the next general election. Let's continue the practice of allowing young people to get involved in shaping the world that they will inherit! It won't affect very many people: only those who turn 18 between the primary and the general election on presidential election years.

**Amendment 77** allows specific cities to vote to expand gaming and bet limits

**A hesitant Yes.** I mostly agree with letting the folks in those towns vote to decide if they want betting limits. Would increase funding to community colleges. But I do have some reservations based on not knowing how this might impact nearby communities.

No mention is made about the effect of this amendment on Southwest Colorado's tribal casinos, but past legal interpretations have found any loosening of state law on gaming for the Central City, Black Hawk and Cripple Creek casinos also applies to the tribal casinos.

**Proposition 113** Joins National popular Vote Interstate Compact

**YES!**

Gives Colorado the ability to give all its nine electoral votes to the candidate winning the most votes in the US. If Colorado becomes a member of the NPVIC and if the compact goes into effect, Colorado will give all nine of its Electoral College votes to the presidential candidate winning the most votes *nationwide* (the winner of the national popular vote.) Currently, Colorado's nine Electoral College votes must go to the presidential candidate receiving the most votes *in Colorado*.

The compact would go into effect only if states representing 270 Electoral College votes adopt it. Currently, 14 states and Washington, D.C. – 187 Electoral College votes total – have passed legislation to join the compact. We're getting close! Let's add Colorado to the tally.

**Proposition 114** Reintroduces gray wolves on public lands

**YES**

A Yes vote for [Proposition 114](#) would require Colorado Parks and Wildlife to create a plan to incrementally reintroduce and then manage the gray wolf on certain designated lands west of

the Continental Divide by the end of 2023. The last gray wolves in Colorado were killed around 1940. The gray wolf is classified as an endangered species except in Minnesota, where it is classified as a threatened species.

Bringing wolves back to the ecosystem will improve the landscape for multiple wildlife species, as it improves biodiversity. Ranchers who lose livestock to wolves will be compensated for losses.

I thought this was interesting from the [Denver Post](#), so I'll share it: In Yellowstone, scientists have observed that introducing wolves in 1995 has [dramatically altered the landscape](#) in ways that are beneficial to multiple animals. Because elk fear wolves, they don't overgraze a single area, especially in the winter when the ungulates munch on young willow, aspen and other saplings. Overgrazing had pushed out beavers who relied upon the willows and aspen for food and also for building their shelters and dams, which subsequently created pools of water assisting in times of drought for fish populations and other animals.

However, Montana has restored balance by allowing liberal wolf hunting laws. Not only is the elk herd healthier, according to wildlife biologists who note the wolves primarily kill sick and injured big game, but the decline in population has allowed other big game to thrive. Bison and deer populations have grown, as have other predators who scavenge off wolf kills like bears and coyotes.

Biologists seem to agree that Yellowstone's animal populations are healthier with wolves.

#### **Proposition 115** Abortion ban after 22 weeks

**NO!**

Removes a woman's right to choose her own destiny. This initiative would prohibit abortions after a fetus reaches 22 weeks gestational age. Under the initiative, abortions after 22 weeks would be lawful only if a physician believes it is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Ruth Bader Ginsberg said, in her 1993 confirmation hearing, "The decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself. When the government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a full adult human responsible for her own choices." — [1993 Senate Confirmation Hearings](#)

RBG also said, "The conflict is not simply one between a fetus' interest and a woman's interest. Also in the balance is a woman's autonomous charge of her full life's course, her ability to stand in relation to men, society and the state as an independent, self-sustaining equal citizen."

This is an issue of equality. Women who have the means to get an abortion will always be able to end an unwanted pregnancy. The risks, dangers, and burden falls far more heavily on disadvantaged women and women of color who will not have the same access as more privileged women do, to direct their own destinies with regard to reproductive choice.

#### **Proposition 116** Decreases state income tax rate from 4.63% to 4.55%

**NO!**

Already facing a billion-dollar deficit next year, the state's own fiscal impact study estimates that state revenue would fall by more than \$158 million in 2020-21 and nearly \$170 million in 2021-22.

Decades of tax cuts for the wealthy and for corporations perpetuate inequities at a time where more funding is needed for all the things we care most about (environmental protection, social justice, education, etc.,) not less. Check out this [no endorsement](#) from The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, who said it better than I could.

**Proposition 117** Requires voter approval of some enterprises exempt from TABOR

**NO.** Strengthens TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights, a 1992 state constitutional amendment) when what we want to do is get rid of TABOR.

A Yes vote for [Proposition 117](#) would require statewide voter approval of new state enterprises if revenue from fees and surcharges to support the new enterprise is greater than \$100 million in the first five years. Enterprises were established through TABOR, a 1992 state constitutional amendment. Enterprises are government-owned businesses that provide goods or services for a fee or surcharge that is paid for by the individuals or entities that are purchasing the goods or services. Enterprises have funded things in the past such as Parks and Wildlife, the lottery, and many transportation issues started as enterprises. This measure would make creating enterprises, which have been very useful to Coloradans, way too onerous. Check out this [no endorsement](#) from The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, who said it better than I could.

**Proposition 118** Paid medical and family leave program

**YES**

A Yes vote for [Proposition 118](#) supports establishing a family and medical leave program in Colorado. The program would provide 12 weeks, and in certain cases up to 16 weeks, of paid leave. The maximum benefit would be \$1,100 per week.

The program would be funded through a payroll tax to be paid for by employees and employers in a 50-50 split. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees would be exempt from paying the premium. Sole proprietors could opt in to the program.

Only four states—California, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island—currently offer paid family and medical leave. All of these state programs are funded through employee-paid payroll taxes and administered through their respective disability programs.

**Amendment B** Repeals Gallagher Amendment

**YES**

A Yes vote for [Amendment B](#) would repeal the Gallagher Amendment to the Colorado Constitution. The Gallagher Amendment currently requires residential property taxes to equal 45% of the total share of property taxes and nonresidential property taxes to equal 55%, but non-residential property has to stay at 29% of the total collected property tax, so residential property taxes fluctuate. Got it? I know! Super confusing!!

In Colorado, the value of home prices has been going up faster than the value of nonresidential property. That has led the tax assessment rate for homes to drop over time, meaning homeowners often see lower property tax bills after each two-year reassessment cycle.

When the Gallagher Amendment was adopted in 1982, 21% of the value of a home was taxed. The current tax assessment rate for residential property is 7.15%. This has meant mostly a decrease in residential property tax over the years since Gallagher went into effect. That might sound good, but because of that, the state government, counties, municipalities, and many small districts such as local fire departments and libraries are not able to maintain current levels of important services due to ever decreasing revenue levels. Gallagher is bad for Colorado. Finally we have a chance to repeal it.

### **Amendment C** Changes charitable gaming license requirements

#### **Yes**

Nonprofits must be in existence for five years before they can get a bingo-raffle license.

Amendment C could cut that to three years.

It's puzzling why this is in our constitution, but it is. Amendment C is the only ballot measure this year that requires more than a simple majority to pass. It requires a 55% Yes vote to pass.

### **Proposition EE** Increases taxes on tobacco and vaping for education and health

#### **YES**

A Yes vote for [Proposition EE](#) would raise taxes by up to \$294 million annually by imposing a tax on nicotine liquids, e-cigarettes and other vaping products that is equal to the state tax on traditional tobacco products. The tax would be phased in incrementally.

Currently, the state has no tax on vaping products. Colorado's current tax rate on cigarettes is \$0.84 per pack, which is relatively low nationally. It ranks 39th among states, [according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#).

The proposal incrementally raises taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products over the next seven years.

The current \$0.84 per pack rate would gradually rise to \$2.64 by July of 2027. It also includes a minimum price requirement, so a pack of cigarettes could be sold for no less than \$7, and \$70 for a carton beginning in 2021. That minimum would climb again in 2024 to no less than \$7.50 a pack and \$75 a carton.

For vaping products, the measure would create a tax on nicotine products to match tax rates for tobacco products. That rate would start at 30 percent manufacturer's list price in 2021 and would gradually rise to 62 percent of that price by 2027.

If Colorado imposes taxes for cigarettes, it is fair that similar products also be taxed. The new taxes would fund preschool programs, rural schools, K-12 education, affordable housing, rental assistance, eviction legal assistance, health care programs, general state spending and tobacco education programs.

### **San Miguel County Ballot Question 1A** Protecting Existing Levels of County Funding

#### **YES**

This measure allows a sitting board of San Miguel County Commissioners to adjust the property tax mills to keep revenue levels at 7.15 (2019 levels) even if the Gallagher ratio causes a reduction in residential property tax collection.

If we want safe roads, social services, county health services that have been so vital during the pandemic, wise land use planning, environmental protection and more, we can't keep reducing the tax rate.

This measure will become obsolete if Gallagher is repealed by Amendment B.

**Please vote early!**

Here are some more helpful resources:

Track your ballot: <https://colorado.ballottrax.net/voter/>

Sample Ballot:

<https://www.sanmiguelcountyco.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6101/Sample-Ballot---2020-General-Election-PDF?bidId=>

Lots of voting info: <https://justvotecolorado.org/> and <https://iwillvote.com/>