

THE ROCKY Mountaineer

February 2020, Issue 2

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- **SUPPORT FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH INSURANCE OPTION IS STRONG AND REMAINS ROBUST AFTER OPPOSITION MESSAGING**
- **VOTERS BELIEVE THE STATE'S TAX SYSTEM IS BROKEN AND THAT THE WEALTHY SHOULD PAY MORE TO FIX IT**
- **VOTERS SUPPORT PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ADDRESSING DRUG COSTS, FAMILY LEAVE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Welcome Back to The Mountaineer

Welcome to The Mountaineer, a resource for progressives and a guide for advocates across the state of Colorado, published by Global Strategy Group and ProgressNow Colorado. Research presented in this publication is the result of a survey conducted between January 31 and February 4, 2020 among 818 registered voters in Colorado.

This second publication will focus on how progressives can best frame the debates around a public health insurance option in Colorado, Colorado's broken tax system, and other policy priorities.

In this issue

Initial Support for a “Public Option” is High and Remains Robust After Attacks

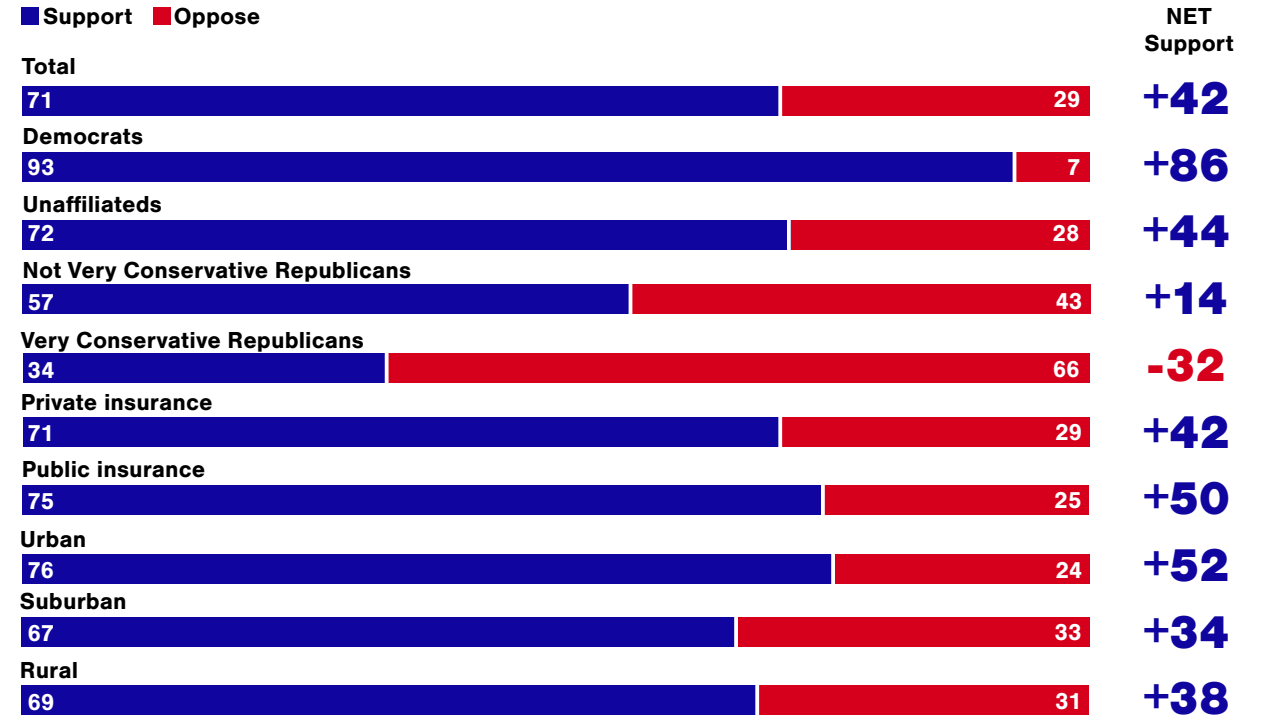
Despite a well-funded ad blitz from opponents, about two-thirds of Colorado voters support a plan to create a public health insurance option that would be designed by the state and compete with private insurance plans in Colorado. After reading a neutral description with more information about the proposal, more than seven in 10 voters support it, including solid majorities of Democrats, Unaffiliateds, and less conservative Republicans, as well as those with both private and public insurance, and voters in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

After voters are exposed to a simulated debate with messaging from both sides, including attacks taken directly from actual communications from opponents, support remains at a robust 65%.

Initial Support: As you may know, some people in Colorado have proposed a plan to create a public health insurance option that would be designed by the state and compete with private insurance plans here in Colorado. Just based on what you know, do you support or oppose this plan to create a public health insurance option in Colorado?

Informed Support: Under this proposal, Coloradans who purchase their own health insurance will have the option of purchasing traditional insurance coverage from an insurance company, as they do now, or a new public insurance option that would be designed by the state but sold by private companies. This new public option would have to meet requirements to provide a certain level of benefits at a certain price. In order to reduce prices, hospitals and insurance companies would be required to participate and the plan would set stricter limits on how much hospitals could charge for their services and how much profit insurance companies could make.

Informed support



Vote movement



All messaging tested can be seen on [poll toplines](#)

Effective Messaging for the “Public Option” Centers on Bringing Down Costs While Pushing off Hospital Profits

The most effective messaging for the so-called public option focuses on the prospect that it will bring down costs and pushes off of the profits that hospitals have made charging Coloradans record prices.

Messaging Language Tested

Tier 1: Profits

In 2018, hospitals in Colorado made over \$2 billion in profits by charging Colorado families the second highest prices in the country. The public option would reduce their profits and pass those savings on to consumers.

Tier 2:

Comprehensive/cost

The public option would ensure that all Coloradans have an option that would provide comprehensive health benefits at a lower cost.

Rural

The public option would empower Coloradans in 22 mostly rural Colorado counties where there is currently only one insurer, creating competition in the market which would lead to lower prices and better service.

Savings: Competition

The public option could save Coloradans close to 20% on their individual premiums by forcing insurance companies to compete for your business.

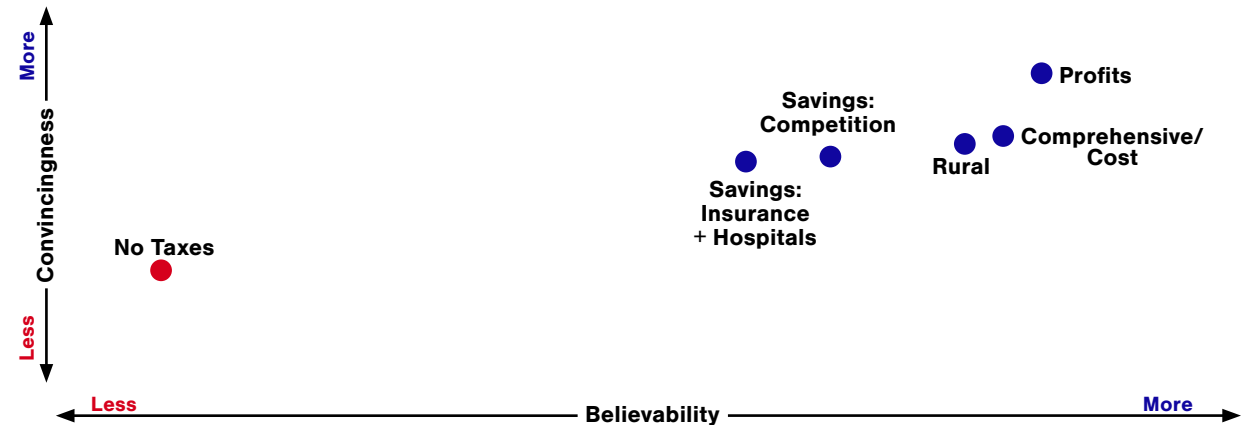
Savings: Insurance + Hospitals

The public option could save Coloradans close to 20% on their individual premiums by limiting insurance company profits and requiring hospitals to reduce the amount they charge for their services.

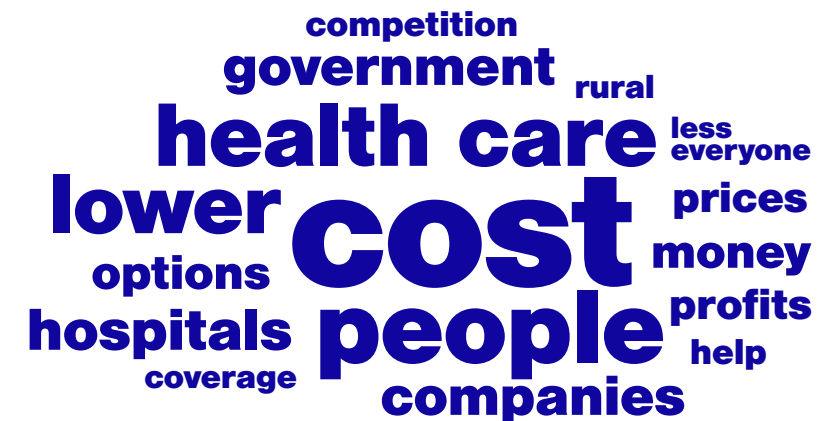
Tier 3: No Taxes

The public option will be designed by the state but offered by private insurance companies and funded by the people who purchase it. It won't cost taxpayers a dime.

Among Swing Voters: Please indicate how believable and how convincing each is as a reason to support this plan to create a public health insurance option.



What is the most convincing reason to support this plan to create a public health insurance option?



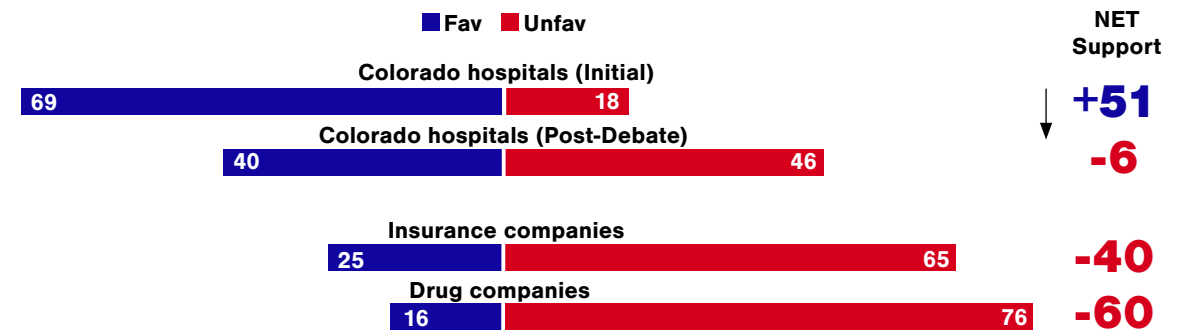
Hospitals Are Viewed Favorably but Have a Lot to Risk in This Debate; Insurance and Drug Companies Very Unpopular

Both insurance and drug companies receive low ratings from voters. Progressives should lean into how this plan will force insurance companies to compete, limit their profits, and stop them from gouging consumers. Where possible, they should also tie this proposal to efforts to bring down prescription drug costs. (See Page 7 for more on prescription drug costs.)

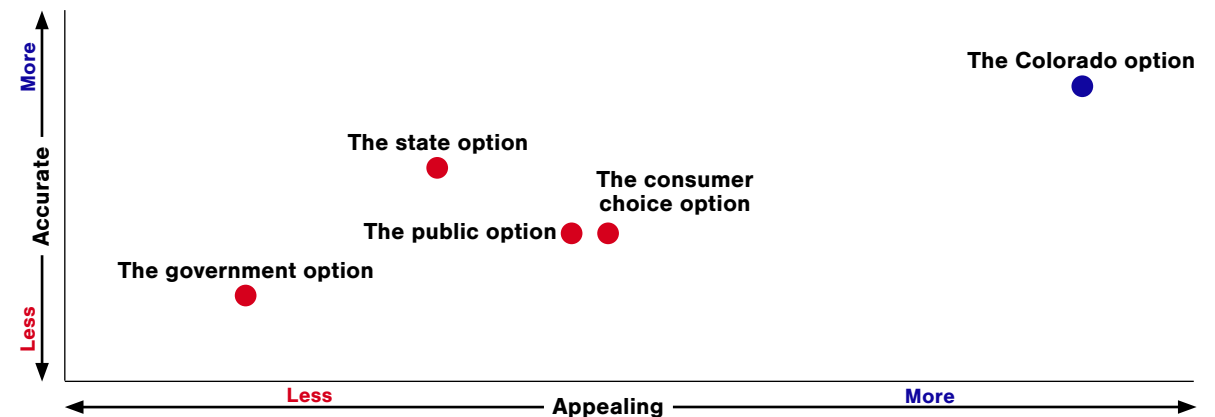
Meanwhile, while Colorado hospitals enter the conversation with very strong ratings, **they are putting their reputation at risk** by engaging in the fight to stop a public option. As a result of the simulated debate, which features strong messaging from supporters pushing back on hospital profits (see page 4), the net rating of Colorado hospitals drops an incredible 57 points – from +51 to -6.

Finally, after considering the plan, **voters believe that the best way to describe this proposal is not as the “public option,” but rather the “Colorado option”** – which they see as both the most appealing and most accurate label.

Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following groups.



To describe this proposal, which two names do you find to be the most appealing? Which two names do you find to be the most accurate?

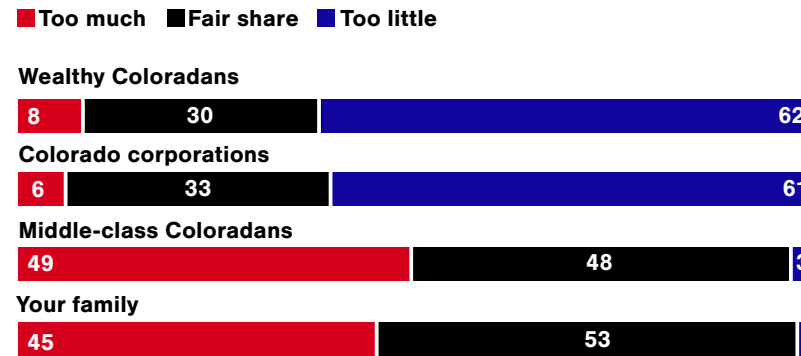


Voters Agree that the Wealthy and Corporations Pay Too Little – and Support a Switch to a Progressive Income Tax

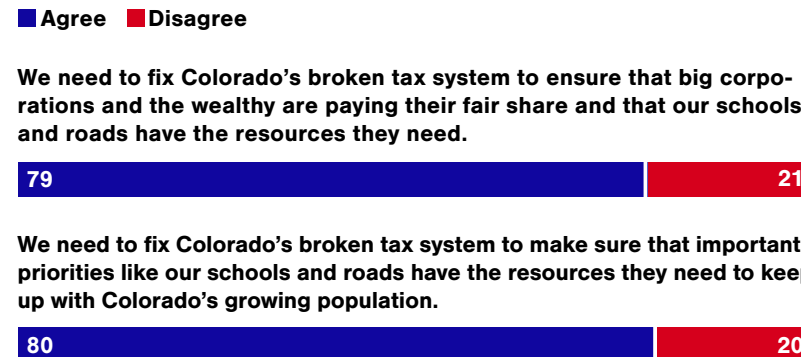
Voters believe that wealthy Coloradans and corporations do not pay their fair share in taxes and that there is a need to fix Colorado’s broken tax system.

Less-conservative Republicans join Democrats and Unaffiliateds in supporting a proposed progressive income tax. Colorado voters whose families have incomes under \$150,000 overwhelmingly support such a proposal, while those making over \$150,000 a year are split.

Please indicate if you think each group is paying their fair share in Colorado state taxes, paying too much, or paying too little.

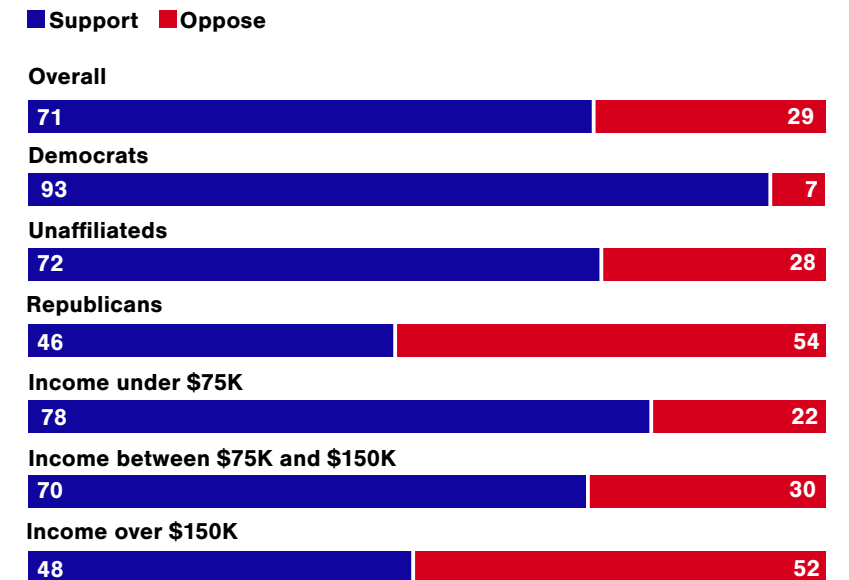


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Just based on what you know, do you support or oppose this proposal?

Some people in Colorado have proposed a plan that would raise state income taxes on individuals with an income over \$250,000 per year and use that revenue to increase funding for schools and other priorities including transportation, and to cut income taxes for Coloradans with incomes under \$250,000.



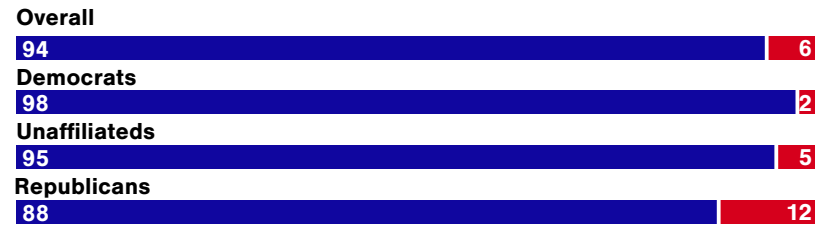
Coloradans Want Lawmakers to Take Progressive Steps to Improve Their Daily Lives

Colorado voters overwhelmingly support proposals to require greater prescription drug price transparency and to create a cost review board that could set limits on drug prices.

Meanwhile, Unaffiliateds join Democrats in supporting a paid family leave requirement for employees, regardless of the size of their business.

Some people in Colorado have proposed a new law that would make the cost of prescription drugs more transparent by requiring drug manufacturers, insurance companies, and pharmacy benefit managers to disclose more information on the cost to produce drugs, the prices being charged to consumers and insurance companies, and any rebates that are available to consumers.

■ Support ■ Oppose

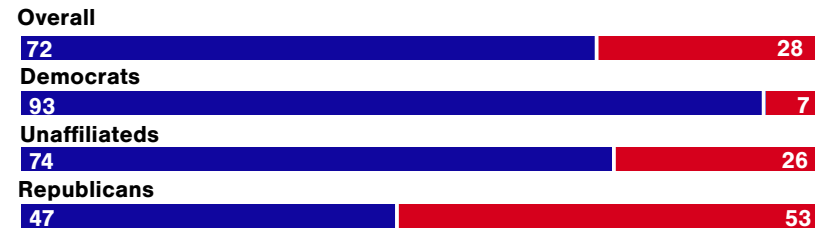


Some people in Colorado have proposed a new law that would create an independent board to review the cost of commonly prescribed, high-cost prescription drugs and recommend ways to decrease prices, including setting limits on the prices of certain drugs.

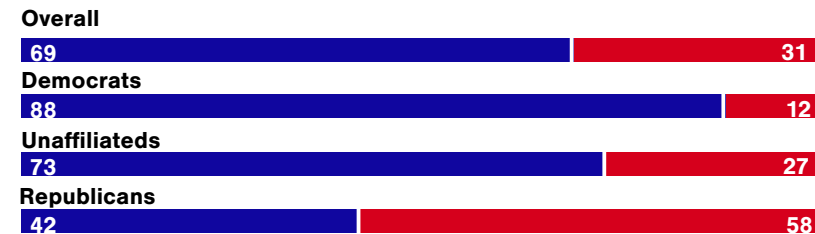


Some people in Colorado have proposed a new law that would require **all Colorado businesses** to provide their employees with up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave per year in order to take care of sick family members or a newborn child.

■ Support ■ Oppose

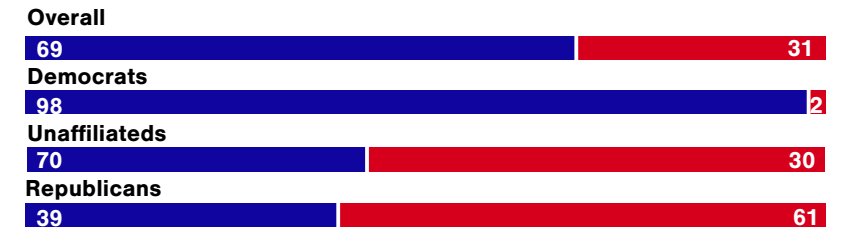


Some people in Colorado have proposed a new law that would require **Colorado businesses with 50 or more employees** to provide their employees with up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave per year in order to take care of sick family members or a newborn child.

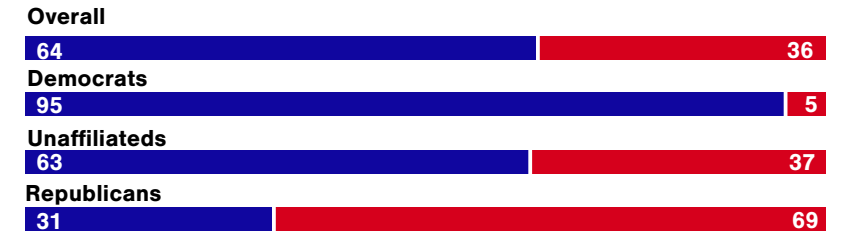


Colorado lawmakers should act to combat climate change by dramatically reducing carbon emissions in Colorado.

■ Agree ■ Disagree



Colorado needs stronger limits on oil and gas fracking in order to protect our water, air, and neighborhoods.



About The Mountaineer

Colorado has a long history as a leader in developing and implementing ground-breaking progressive policy, but as the state's leaders continue to build on this progressive tradition, they also face unique challenges that range from the state's TABOR amendment to its rapid growth.

The Mountaineer is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, and responsive tool to help inform the unique political and policy debates in Colorado. By conducting methodologically sound research and providing reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press, The Mountaineer will help progressive leaders and communicators shape the debate on the issues that matter most to Coloradans.

About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 818 registered voters in Colorado January 31 - February 4, 2020. The survey was conducted online via a combination of text-to-web methodology, with voters chosen at random from the voter file, and with respondents who were recruited from multiple opt-in online panel vendors. Respondents were verified against a voter file, and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of Colorado's registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables including party registration, race, gender, age, education, region, and population density.

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