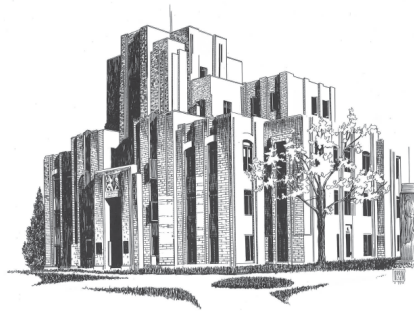


2026 Government State Legislative and Budget Principles and Priorities

Boulder County, Colorado



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2026 Legislative Principles

Boulder County's state legislative and budget priorities adhere to the following Legislative Principles, which guide the development of the positions the county takes on state legislation:

RACIAL EQUITY

Boulder County is committed to creating and adopting fully inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive policies. We have a responsibility to interrupt institutional racism which manifests through racist policy, practices, and behaviors. We are dedicated to eliminating systemic discrimination against people in all protected classes. We address racism at its root and review all state legislation through a lens of racial equity and strive to solicit the voices and perspectives of those historically excluded from the legislative process.

CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Boulder County is dedicated to protecting and enhancing our environment for generations to come. We advance strategies that promote sustainability, address the climate crisis, protect our open lands, and improve air quality. We make decisions and promote policies that address the inequitable impacts of the climate crisis and pollution.

FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

Boulder County is focused on the effective use of taxpayer funds through efficient service delivery and integration of public programs and services to achieve equitable outcomes. We engage in collaborative decision-making efforts with local, regional, and statewide partner agencies to advocate for county priorities in the state budget and concerning fiscal decisions that will impact our organization and our constituents.

DEMOCRACY

Many, if not all, of the basic functions of Boulder County's government rely upon the authority granted the county under the constitutions of the United States and Colorado and federal and state law. Basic human rights, equal protection under the law, and quality of life in Boulder County are dependent upon a fully functioning United States democracy. Boulder County supports policy that maintains and strengthens the democratic form of government in the United States and Colorado and opposes overcriminalization and policy that weakens human rights and democratic tenets in government.



2026 Legislative Priorities

The following are Boulder County's priorities for the 2026 state legislative session, including references to legislation that we anticipate will be introduced in the General Assembly. We ask for our delegation members' support for these bills that are important to Boulder County and our shared constituents.

RACIAL EQUITY, EQUITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Create and adopt fully inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive policies to achieve social, environmental, and economic justice and equity.

Background Checks: Support legislation that removes barriers to non-employment opportunities such as internships and volunteer opportunities by prohibiting the requirement of a social security number during the background check process.

Native American Rights: Support legislation that ensures the rights of Native American individuals in Colorado and recognition of the sovereignty of Native American Nations.

Rights for LGBTQ+ Individuals: Support legislation that ensures equitable rights for all LGBTQ+ individuals, including but not limited to transgender, non-binary, gender queer, intersex, two-spirit, agender, and other gender expansive individuals.

Language Access: Support legislative, funding, and other efforts to ensure full language access to government information and services.

AGING AND VETERAN SERVICES

Secure a high quality of life for Colorado's older adults and veterans.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Protect and ensure high-quality, continuous, and affordable health and behavioral healthcare services for all Coloradans.

Expanded Access to Services: Support legislation, funding, and other efforts that expand access to quality mental health and substance use disorder prevention, screening, treatment, and recovery services, including in-patient treatment, and ensure parity with the health care system.

Health Insurance Affordability: Support sustainable funding mechanisms that ensure access to affordable health insurance, including OmniSalud, Medicaid, and insurance coverage purchased on the marketplace.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Ensure that Coloradans have access to high-quality, continuous, and affordable public health services that protect and enhance the health of the public.

Gun Violence Prevention: Support policies to prevent gun violence in Colorado communities.



COMMUNITY JUSTICE

Strengthen the ability of community justice agencies to provide integrated treatment services that reduce recidivism and criminal justice costs while improving public safety.

Pretrial Practices: Support legislation and funding for effective pretrial practices and policy efforts to limit pretrial detention of individuals that pose a low risk to public safety.

Criminal Justice Reform: Support policies and funding for criminal justice reform that reduces juvenile and criminal justice system involvement and recidivism through evidence-based practices in offender programming, alternative sentencing, and diversion in all areas of the criminal justice system including, but not limited to, dispatch, community corrections, emergency response, and sentencing.

Competency System Reforms: Support reform efforts and funding to address the competency waitlist and negative impacts to people served by the limited capacity of Colorado's competency system.

DEMOCRACY

Strengthen the democratic form of government in the United States and Colorado in support of basic human rights, equal protection under the law, and democratic principles.

Protect Constitutional and Civil Rights: Support efforts to codify fundamental federal constitutional and civil rights protections in Colorado law.

ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME STABILITY

Increase employment opportunities, improve economic equity, and promote self-sufficiency for all Coloradans.

Public Workforce System: Support continuation of Workforce as a component of county government.

Regional Minimum Wage Authority: Support policy options to better facilitate the development of regionally focused local minimum wages.

Self-sufficiency: Support efforts that alleviate poverty, including ensuring access to basic safety net services such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Colorado Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Advance climate action, reduce the use of fossil fuels, promote clean energy, and reduce waste.

On-Bill Repayment: Support on-bill repayment legislation or similar repayment mechanisms to facilitate energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy upgrades to commercial and residential buildings without upfront costs, to make these solutions more accessible to homeowners and businesses.

Energy and Public Utilities Commission: Support policies that increase authority for the Public Utilities Commission to focus on clean energy and Colorado's carbon reduction goals. Boulder County also supports the expansion of clean, responsible, and sustainable energy in Colorado.

Air Quality and Ozone Reduction: Support state legislation, regulation, and other policy means to improve air quality and public health, including reform measures for the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission. Boulder County supports policies that protect our residents from the exacerbation of asthma and other lung diseases due to exposure to air pollution.



Environmental Justice and Just Transition: Support legislation that advances environmental justice in protecting our most vulnerable communities from disproportionate environmental burdens and which incorporates equity, accessibility, and just transition considerations.

Buildings Emissions & Electrification: Buildings are responsible for a large portion of carbon emissions and other air pollution that impacts both outdoor and indoor air. Boulder County supports policies that encourage increased electrification of commercial and residential buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Protect and enhance the health of the public and the environment.

FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

Ensure the effective use of taxpayer funds through efficient service delivery and integration of public programs and services to achieve equitable outcomes.

Operational Efficiencies in Service Delivery: Pursue efficient service delivery and other strategies to achieve operational efficiencies and reduce operating costs to county and state government.

Improve State-administered Technology Systems: Improve and increase access to safety net services through operational and technology upgrades to the Colorado Benefits Management System and other state-administered technology platforms.

Unlawful Conduct on Public Property: Support legislation to improve the ability of local law enforcement to address unlawful conduct on federal public wildlands that threatens public safety.

Vacancies in County Elected Offices: Support legislation to reform the statutorily mandated process for filling vacancies in county elected offices to increase access to these positions and address conflicting language in state statute.

HOUSING

Ensure safe and attainable housing for all Coloradans through strategies that increase access to affordable housing and home ownership opportunities.

Funding for Affordable and Workforce Housing: Support policy that generates funding for affordable and workforce housing opportunities, including, but not limited to, fees or taxes on the use of housing for investment purposes and vacant home taxes.

Home Ownership: Support innovative legislative and policy approaches to prioritize first-time and owner-occupied home ownership opportunities in Colorado, with a focus on strategies to help homeowners retain ownership of their home in the face of the increasing cost of housing.

Mobile Home Taxation Reform: Support legislation to ensure equitable and efficient mobile home taxation and titling processes.

HUMAN SERVICES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Improve human services systems and programs to support safety, self-sufficiency, and positive outcomes for individuals and families.

Policy and Programs: In Colorado, programs to protect children from abuse, provide cash and food assistance, support food banks, find employment, and access health and childcare are chronically underfunded. Boulder County opposes any new state requirements or programs in human services that do not include funding to enable provision of the services.



LAND USE

Improve the built environment and quality of life for Coloradans by promoting well-planned communities and addressing local environmental, transportation, and resource challenges through policy approaches that recognize the importance of local control.

NATURAL DISASTER, RESILIENCY, AND RECOVERY

Ensure the safety of our community during emergencies, prepare for and mitigate prior to natural disasters, and facilitate timely and full recovery following natural disasters.

Climate Change Preparedness: Support climate change preparedness efforts to protect Boulder County residents and businesses from the negative effects of extreme weather-related disasters.

PUBLIC LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote land conservation and preservation and outdoor opportunities for Coloradans.

TAXATION AND FINANCE

Improve the fiscal position of the state to sustain services to Coloradans today and into the future.

County Excise Tax Authority: Support legislation to provide counties with authority to ask voters to impose local excise taxes to enhance fiscal autonomy and build resilient and thriving communities.

TRANSPORTATION

Improve the transportation system through policy efforts that increase safety for all roadway users, support multi-modal transportation opportunities, increase the use of clean vehicles, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and provide adequate funding for local and regional transit agencies.

Collaborative Planning: Support collaborative efforts between the state and local governments to link land use, housing, and transportation planning and investment.

Clean Transportation: Support policies that further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants from the transportation sector while achieving climate and air quality goals and mandates.

Safety: Support efforts to improve roadway safety to achieve Vision Zero safety goals for all modes of travel, and especially vulnerable roadway users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

Vehicle Feebates: Support legislation to utilize vehicle registration fees and rebates to promote the purchase of electric vehicles and provide counties with permissive authority to implement a fee program.



2026 State Budget Principles

Boulder County recognizes the importance of a state government that is fiscally responsible. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the General Assembly and administration on development of the state budget, especially regarding policies and programs that affect our organization or our constituents.

In recent years, multiple circumstances have placed unprecedented stress on the budget of Colorado's local governments, especially those funded primarily by property taxes, including counties. Legislation that has reduced property tax revenues, the post-pandemic wind-down of American Rescue Plan Act funding, inflationary pressures on costs and wages, and a growing number of state mandates, many of which have not been funded, means local governments must do more with less even as we continue our efforts to steward our tax revenues as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The way forward will require collaboration between the state and its counties. Boulder County offers the following strategies that it asks the administration and General Assembly to consider as we move into a future of financial austerity:

- Include adequate funding for staffing and administrative costs associated with statutorily required programs, reforms, and services that will be implemented at the county level.
- Include adequate funding for any legislation that is expected to be implemented at the local level.
- Increase fees for fee-funded programs, as needed and where appropriate, to address local government and state government staffing and other program needs and require industries and polluters to pay for the costs of regulating those sectors.
- Expand the revenue-raising authorities of county governments to enable counties to provide adequate services to their communities.
- Consider statewide referred measures and other policy changes to increase revenue to support critical services and programs.
- Reform the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) and any other constitutional and statutory barriers that artificially limit Colorado's revenue capacity.

Utilizing these strategies, Boulder County advocates for a flexible state revenue structure that can quickly respond to changing economic conditions.



2026 State Budget Priorities

In the development of the FY 2025-2026 state budget, Boulder County asks for the support of the General Assembly in maintaining or increasing appropriation levels for the following important areas:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING

Access to Care: Support funding efforts to protect Coloradans' access to behavioral health and health care services, including but not limited to Medicaid, the OMNI Salud program, Cover all Coloradans, and coverage through the Colorado Health Insurance Marketplace.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

Access to Services: Support efforts to safely increase access to community corrections services for appropriate individuals.

Preventing Youth Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System: Support funding for evidence-informed programs that reduce crime and youth justice system involvement, including the Boulder County IMPACT partnership and alternatives to incarceration through the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum.

Competency Waitlist and State Mental Health Hospital Funding: Support funding to address Colorado's competency waitlist and increase access to in-patient mental health services at Colorado's state mental health hospitals.

ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME STABILITY

Workforce: Boulder County supports continued funding for Colorado's locally informed and managed Workforce Centers.

HUMAN SERVICES

Boulder County supports state funding for safety net services that assist Coloradans with addressing economic and other barriers to securing food, housing, health care, and employment.

TANF and CCCAP: Support policy and programmatic reforms to increase Coloradan's access to safety net programs such as TANF Basic Cash Assistance and CCCAP, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.

Medicaid and SNAP: Support strategies to reduce the administrative burden for accessing Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for both clients and counties, such as streamlining eligibility processes, while sustaining funding for staff to support individuals in applying for and maintaining their benefits.

Child Welfare: Support reform of child welfare funding methods to ensure investments are data-driven, transparent, and aligned to achieve statewide outcomes through best practices.

Child Welfare Funding: Support expansion of the State of Colorado's access to federal child welfare funds by increasing the number of evidence-based programs utilized in the state and reported through the Families First Prevention Services Plan submitted to the federal government.