2026 Jeffco EDC Voter Guide

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3, 2026. This year, Jefferson County ballots include statewide and local ballot measures, along with federal, statewide and Jefferson County races. Jeffco EDC encourages our business community to review the information below and consider the impacts for your business. Jeffco EDC evaluates each measure through one lens: its impact on job creation in Jefferson County.

Ballot measures and Jeffco EDC's positions

01	Amendment 87: Graduated Income Tax	OPPOSE
02	Proposition 136: Income Tax Rate Cap	SUPPORT
03	Proposition NN: TABOR Revenue Cap Increase for K-12 Education	NO POSITION
04	Ballot Issues 5A and 5B: Jeffco Public Schools Mill Levy Overrides	SUPPORT

Candidate Q&A

05	U.S. House of Representatives, District 7
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PART 1

Ballot measures

Jeffco EDC's Government Affairs Committee and Admin Committee reviewed each measure below after hearing presentations from supporters and opponents. Members are encouraged to read the full ballot language and the TABOR notice mailed to voters.

01

BALLOT MEASURE 1 OF 4 · STATEWIDE

Amendment 87

Graduated Income Tax ("The Income Tax Fairness Act")

EDC POSITION

Oppose

EDC RATIONALE

Jeffco EDC opposes Amendment 87 because it would make Colorado less competitive for the job-creating investment we work to attract and keep. The top rate would rise from 4.4% to 8.4%. That is the highest among our neighboring states and about the fifth highest in the nation, and site selectors weigh it directly against Utah, Wyoming, Texas, and Arizona. Owners of growing pass-through businesses would face the same 7.4% to 8.4% rates as large corporations once their income crosses $500,000. Because the brackets are not indexed to inflation, more of those owners would move into the higher brackets every year. We share the goals of funding child care and education, but a permanent constitutional change to the tax structure puts business expansion, relocation, and hiring at too much risk.

The measure

What it does

Amendment 87 would replace Colorado's flat 4.4% income tax with six brackets ranging from 3.7% to 8.4% for individuals and corporations, beginning in tax year 2027. Filers with Colorado taxable income below roughly $510,834 would pay less, and those above would pay more. Taxable income above $500,000 would be taxed at 7.4% to 8.4%. The Legislative Council Staff estimates about $1.97 billion in new revenue in FY 2027-28. The new revenue would be exempt from the TABOR limit and used for K-12 education, health care, and early childcare and education. The measure changes the Colorado Constitution and statute, and the brackets are not indexed to inflation.

Who supports and opposes

Supporters include the Protect Colorado's Future Coalition (Bell Policy Center and more than 80 organizations). The Colorado Chamber of Commerce opposes.

The case for

- Cuts taxes for 97% of individual filers and 96% of C-corps, including most small businesses, seniors and veterans; only the top 3% of individuals and ~5% of corporations pay more.
- Raises ~$2B/year for K-12, health care and childcare at a time of deep state budget cuts driven by TABOR and federal Medicaid changes — without raising sales or property taxes that fall hardest on working families and small business.
- Graduated rates are the norm: used in 28 states (11 of them Republican-led) and at the federal level. Colorado is an outlier.
- Business owners earning under $500K would pay lower income tax than in 20 of the 41 other income-tax states; small C-corps would rank 35th lowest nationally.
- Migration evidence: proponents cite CBPP (2023) and IPS (2025) research and Massachusetts' experience, where a surtax on income over $1M has generated more than twice the projected revenue three years running without a measurable wealth exodus.
- Funds are restricted to three uses, must supplement rather than supplant existing spending, and are subject to an annual public audit.
- Directly addresses early childhood and health care affordability — both business-community priorities that proponents argue cannot be solved without new revenue.

The case against

- A multi-billion-dollar tax increase that moves Colorado from one of the lowest flat rates in the country to the highest top marginal rate among neighboring states (Utah 4.5%, Wyoming 0%) and roughly the 5th highest top rate nationally, behind Massachusetts.
- Competitiveness and migration risk: higher top rates can push high earners, entrepreneurs, skilled workers and businesses to lower-tax states. The Chamber's 2025 Relocations Tracker documents a rising number of companies leaving Colorado since 2019, mostly to Texas and Florida.
- Pass-through owners are treated like large corporations: a successful S-corp or LLC owner whose personal return exceeds $500K faces rates of 7.4–8.4%.
- Brackets are not indexed to inflation, so more taxpayers drift into higher brackets every year.
- The state should examine its existing spending before asking for new revenue;
- constitutional changes are permanent and hard for future legislatures to adjust.
- No fixed allocation among K-12, health care and childcare — the legislature decides, and "health care" is defined broadly.
- Legal uncertainty if Proposition 136 also passes.

Top business impacts

Implications for Jefferson County employers

Direct tax effect

Most member businesses and their owners fall under $500K in taxable income and would see a small cut (roughly $175–$325/year for individuals; a modest reduction for small C-corps).

Owners and C-corps above $500K in Colorado taxable income pay substantially more:

+$1,175 at $550K, +$11,550 at $875K, +$55,925 at $2M.

Competitiveness & site selection

Top marginal rate becomes a visible line item in relocation and expansion comparisons against Utah, Wyoming, Texas, Florida and Arizona — the states the Chamber report identifies as destinations for departing firms.

Workforce & talent

Risk of losing high-earning executives, physicians, founders and investors whose personal returns cross $500K; proponents argue the research does not support large-scale tax migration.

END OF 01 · AMENDMENT 87

NEXT: 02 · PROPOSITION 136

02

BALLOT MEASURE 2 OF 4 · STATEWIDE

Proposition 136

Income Tax Rate Cap

EDC POSITION

Support

EDC RATIONALE

Jeffco EDC supports Proposition 136 because a stable, predictable income tax rate helps businesses commit to expanding and hiring here. It keeps the current 4.4% rate as a ceiling. No one pays more, and it has no fiscal impact. For employers planning multi-year capital investments, and for us as we compete for projects against lower-tax states, a clear commitment to a low flat rate is a real recruitment advantage. Our position on 136 goes together with our opposition to Amendment 87.

The measure

What it does	Proposition 136 sets 4.4%, the current rate, as the maximum state income tax rate for individuals and corporations beginning January 1, 2027. It is a statute, not a constitutional change. The Legislative Council Staff reports no fiscal impact. Its practical significance is its interaction with Amendment 87: if both pass, the measure with more votes generally controls, and the outcome may require legislative or court resolution.
Who supports and opposes	The Colorado Chamber of Commerce supports. The Bell Policy Center and Protect Colorado's Future oppose.

The case for

- Locks in certainty: employers, entrepreneurs and investors can plan against a known maximum rate.
- Reinforces the 4.4% rate voters overwhelmingly approved in 2022 and keeps Colorado among the lowest-rate income-tax states.
- Keeps Colorado competitive with neighboring states (Utah 4.5%, Wyoming 0%) and with Texas, Florida and Arizona, where the Chamber's relocation data show departing companies are going.
- A stable, predictable tax structure supports capital investment and economic growth.
- Provides voters a direct way to reject the graduated income tax in Amendment 87.

The case against

- The measure has no practical effect on its own: rate increases already require voter approval, and a statutory cap can be overridden by any future voter-approved measure.
- It exists to put Amendment 87 in legal jeopardy. If both pass, the conflict invites a costly court fight and prolonged uncertainty over which tax rates apply for tax year 2027.

- If 136 prevails over 87, it also nullifies 87's tax cuts for the 97% of filers below $500K — not just the increases on high earners.
- It forecloses new revenue at a time when the state faces multi-billion-dollar cuts to Medicaid and education driven by TABOR and federal H.R. 1.
- Committee members raised a general concern about measures that reduce the state's future flexibility.

Top business impacts

Implications for Jefferson County employers

Direct tax effect

None on its own. No business or individual pays more or less because of 136.

Predictability

A statutory ceiling gives a modest signal of rate stability for multi-year investment decisions, though TABOR's voter-approval requirement already provides most of that assurance.

Interaction with Amendment 87

For most members (income under $500K), a 136 win over 87 forgoes a small tax cut. For members above $500K and for large C-corps, a 136 win avoids rates of 7.4–8.4%.

If both pass, businesses face uncertainty about 2027 withholding and estimated payments until the conflict is resolved.

END OF 02 · PROPOSITION 136

NEXT: 03 · PROPOSITION NN

03

BALLOT MEASURE 3 OF 4 · STATEWIDE

Proposition NN

TABOR Revenue Cap Increase for K-12 Education

EDC POSITION

No position

EDC RATIONALE

Jeffco EDC is taking no position on Proposition NN because its effect on job creation is indirect and uncertain. NN does not change any tax rate. Its dedicated funding for CTE and teacher retention lines up with our workforce priorities, but it also permanently reduces TABOR refunds to businesses and households, and our members are divided on that tradeoff. Our support for 5A and 5B already puts us behind local CTE and talent pipeline investments. We will leave this statewide fiscal policy question to voters.

The measure

What it does

Proposition NN permanently raises the state's TABOR revenue cap by an amount equal to the K-12 budget (about $5.6 billion). It does not change any individual or corporate tax rate, but the state would keep revenue it would otherwise refund to taxpayers. For 10 years, state K-12 spending must grow at least 2% per year, directed to teacher pay, teacher retention, smaller class sizes, and career and technical education (CTE). Any additional retained revenue must go to programs that prepare children to be successful in school, such as early childhood and after-school programs. The measure requires an independent state audit and local transparency reporting. The state forecasts roughly $970 million less in TABOR refunds in FY 2027-28.

Who supports and opposes

Supporters include Yes on NN for Colorado Kids, a coalition of more than 60 organizations, and the Jeffco Board of Education. Opponents include Your Family's Future Alliance and the Colorado Chamber of Commerce.

The case for

- Addresses a structural problem: the outdated revenue cap prevents districts from keeping pace with rising K-12 costs, and Colorado consistently ranks near the bottom nationally on school funding and teacher pay.
- No tax-rate increase for individuals or businesses — it changes what the state keeps, not what taxpayers pay in.
- Dollars are earmarked for the four areas most tied to student outcomes and workforce readiness, with audit and transparency requirements attached.
- Statewide reach: helps rural and low-property-wealth districts that cannot pass local mill levy overrides or bonds.
- Complements local measures like Jeffco's 5A/5B rather than replacing them — state and local funding work together.
- Directly aligns with existing business-community policy priorities on CTE expansion, work-based learning, and talent pipelines.

- Strong, stable voter support in polling for nearly a year.

The case against

- It is a large, permanent increase in the TABOR spending limit — an estimated $4.6B more per year that government keeps and taxpayers no longer receive as refunds. The Legislature's own analysis projects a $969.7M reduction in TABOR refunds in FY 2027–28 alone.
- Cost to households: Common Sense Institute estimates roughly $7,000 per taxpayer or $14,000 per family in forgone refunds over 10 years.
- "Not a tax increase" is misleading in practice — the effect on taxpayers' wallets is the same as one.
- Undermines TABOR's core purposes: forcing legislators to set priorities, limiting the growth of government, and preserving the voice of voters on spending.
- Opponents contend less than 40% of the retained revenue is actually projected to reach K-12, with the balance flowing to other programs; they characterize NN as a "bury TABOR"
- measure sold as education.
- K-12 funding is already up 92% (per-pupil up 21%) amid declining enrollment, with a growing share going to administration.
- No sunset — unlike Ref C, the higher limit is permanent.

Top business impacts

Implications for Jefferson County employers

Tax burden

No change to individual or corporate income tax rates or to property taxes.

Businesses and employees would receive smaller or no TABOR refunds in years the state exceeds the current cap (state forecast: ~$970M less refunded in FY 2027–28).

Talent pipeline & CTE

Funding is explicitly directed to CTE, teacher pay, and retention — areas that feed local hiring. Jeffco Public Schools reported 1,888 industry credentials earned in 2024–25 (4x 2020–21) and ~1,500 students waitlisted for Warren Tech.

Cost of living & workforce affordability

Committee members raised concern that employees and customers already struggle to afford living in Jefferson County; forgone refunds add to household pressure even without a rate change.

END OF 03 · PROPOSITION NN

NEXT: 04 · BALLOT ISSUES 5A AND 5B

04

BALLOT MEASURE 4 OF 4 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Ballot Issues 5A and 5B

Jeffco Public Schools Mill Levy Overrides

EDC POSITION

Support

EDC RATIONALE

Jeffco EDC supports 5A and 5B because they strengthen the talent pipeline that employers across Jefferson County depend on to grow and hire. 5A expands career and technical education across the district at a time when about 1,500 students are waitlisted for Warren Tech and industry credentials have quadrupled since 2020–21. That means more job-ready workers for local businesses. Strong schools also help employers of every size recruit and keep talent, since school quality weighs heavily when families decide where to live and work. 5B fixes failing buildings and technology that have cost students instructional days, which also affects working parents and their employers. We recognize the cost to commercial property owners, and we expect the district to deliver the strong citizen oversight and public reporting it has committed to.

The measure

What they do	Ballot Issue 5A is a $73 million general purpose mill levy override for teacher and staff compensation and benefits and for expanded CTE programming (about 10% earmarked for CTE). Ballot Issue 5B is a $60 million special purpose mill levy for building repairs, HVAC, technology, and safety and security upgrades. Neither is a bond. The ballot language requires a citizens' accountability committee, annual public reports and online posting.
Cost	Residential property owners would pay about $3.50 per month per $100,000 of actual home value (about $22.75 per month, or $273 per year, on a $650,000 home). Commercial property owners would pay about $12.74 per month per $100,000 of actual value (about $127.40 per month, or $1,529 per year, on a $1 million property), roughly 3.6 times the residential rate because of Colorado's assessment ratios.
Who supports and opposes	The Jeffco Public Schools Board of Education supports. No formal, organized opposition was identified as of September 11, 2026.

The case for

- Teacher competitiveness: Jeffco ranks 9th of 10 nearby districts in midpoint teacher salary, a disadvantage in attracting and keeping staff.
- CTE demand exceeds supply: ~1,500 students are waitlisted for Warren Tech for 2026–27.
- 5A would expand CTE capacity across the district, not only at Warren Tech.

- 5B addresses urgent, well-defined facility needs — leaking roofs, failing HVAC, outdated technology, and security — protecting instructional time.
- The district has already cut $40M and closed 21 schools; proponents argue it has demonstrated fiscal discipline before asking taxpayers.
- Purpose-restricted ballot language plus a citizens' oversight committee and annual public reporting.
- Brings Jeffco closer to the state and metro average in per-student funding at a relatively modest monthly cost per household.

The case against

- It is a property tax increase. For a $650K home that is ~$273/year; for a $1M commercial property, ~$1,529/year, ongoing.
- Accountability concerns: the 2018 MLO included oversight provisions, yet some funds could not be readily accounted for. The district acknowledges this, says it now knows where the money went, and points to a public tracker — but trust has to be rebuilt.
- Some voters believe the district should live within its current budget, particularly given declining enrollment and school closures.
- Some voters believe school funding is a state responsibility (see Proposition NN) rather than a local tax ask.
- Affordability: residents and consumers report they cannot absorb further cost-of-living increases, and property tax increases land on renters through pass-through as well as on owners.

Top business impacts

Implications for Jefferson County employers

Direct tax cost

Commercial property owners carry the largest per-dollar share: $12.74/month per $100K of actual value (~$1,529/year on a $1M property). Multiply for larger holdings or portfolios.

Tenants in triple-net leases and renters will typically see the increase passed through.

Talent pipeline & CTE

5A expands CTE capacity when 1,500 students are already waitlisted; industry credentials earned quadrupled between 2020–21 and 2024–25. Directly feeds local skilled-worker supply.

Accountability risk

The 2018 MLO accountability gap is the most-cited reservation. The strength of the citizens' committee, annual reporting, and public dashboard will determine whether business support is warranted.

END OF 04 · BALLOT ISSUES 5A AND 5B

NEXT: 05 · U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 7

PART 2

Candidate Q&A

Jeffco EDC and partner business organizations invited candidates to forums and questionnaires focused on issues affecting the business community. Candidate responses below are reproduced as submitted, from forum transcripts and written submissions. Claims and figures are the candidates' own and have not been independently verified. Candidates who did not attend or respond are noted.

05

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 1 OF 8 · FEDERAL

U.S. House of Representatives, District 7

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Brittany Pettersen	Tim Bennett	Susan Hall
D	R	UPA
Please note that Representative Brittany Pettersen was unable to attend this event and submitted written responses		Please note that Susan Hall was unable to attend the event and submitted written responses

Q1 **Federal trade and tariff policy affects what many Colorado businesses pay for materials and what they can sell abroad. What is your position on current trade policy, and how would you represent District 7 employers in those decisions?**

Pettersen
D

I oppose Trump's reckless tariffs, which have raised costs on everything, started a trade war with Canada who is our largest trading partner, disrupted supply chains, and destabilized businesses. Small businesses need predictability and stability, and these constant unexpected costs are threatening their ability to stay afloat. I have used my position to fight back again these tariffs by voting to rein in Trump's actions and worked to force votes on the House floor to reclaim oversight on trade policy. I've also introduced the Trump Tariff Transparency Act to require quarterly reports on what these tariffs cost consumers and small businesses. I will continue to represent District 7 employers by hearing directly from manufacturers, farmers, and small business owners and bringing their perspectives when I work on legislation and vote on the House floor. I will continue to use my position to press this Administration for answers and work to bring relief from economic pain and suffering families and businesses are facing.

Bennett
R

The first thing I think you have to do when you look at tariffs is understand that there's a direct connection between wages and tariffs. And if you don't understand that, it's not going to make a whole lot of sense to you regardless. But if we look at a litmus test for tariffs and say, one, does it protect vital U. S. Industry and does it bring down the cost of living? Then the answer is yes. If not, then the answer is no. So, you can have good tariffs and bad tariffs. But the other thing is that keep in mind that

buying power ultimately is far more important than numbers on a check. So, if you get a paycheck for $1,000,000 but a loaf of bread costs $1,000,000 it doesn't do you a lot of good. So, buying power is key.

Hall
UPA

I think the US needs to be very careful with tariffs. My son ordered the first metal cutter machine from Turkey, and it has been a good investment for his business. It was a good thing for him & his customers not to have to deal with tariffs that make items too expensive. Also, I have been hearing more & more about how Chinese electric cars are being used all around the world and only in California in the US. I think maybe there could be an opportunity for new types of businesses if the electric cars did not have such a high tariff on them.

Q2

Employers across the district report difficulty finding skilled workers. What federal actions, if any, would you support on workforce training, apprenticeships, and work-based learning, and on employment-based visas?

Pettersen
D

I support federal investments in registered apprenticeships, career and technical education, and paid work-based learning, with employers, unions, community colleges, and workforce centers. I helped develop the New Democrat Coalition's Innovation Agenda which calls for investments in apprenticeships and on-the-job training so workers can adapt as technology changes. I also support employment-based visa programs that help employers fill critical workforce shortages while protecting American wages and working conditions. That's why I have proposed policies that would require DHS to release a full authorized allocation of H-2B visas when the Department of Labor confirms employers can't find qualified U.S. workers willing to fill these essential jobs. We must invest in our domestic workforce while maintaining legal immigration pathways that help businesses grow and keep our economy thriving.

Bennett
R

So, I'm on the D30 School Board and we have a CIC down in 38 and that's the Career Innovation Center. And what we do is plumbing, electricians, robotics, programming - any number of other things other than going to college. I think in the early 90s, a lot of Americans were sold this bill of goods and said every single person needs to go to college. That's not true. Certainly not true today. And I think the government should address those skills by mediating between industry. What do you need? And how can we provide that? Or how can we provide a pathway so that just like somebody wants to become an accountant, they can become something else?

Hall
UPA

Certainly there should be tax deductions and other federal assistance for training needed for businesses, including for those holding visas.

Q3

District 7 is home to federal facilities, research institutions and the private-sector jobs connected to them. How would you approach federal investment in these institutions and the local businesses that depend on them?

Pettersen
D

District 7's research institutions, federal facilities, and innovative businesses create jobs, attract investment, and keep Colorado competitive. I will fight for sustained funding and oppose cuts that jeopardize research, disrupt contracts, and weaken services. When Trump canceled more than $600 million for Colorado-affiliated energy projects, I joined our delegation demanding answers and restoration. I also introduced the Constituent Services Impacts of Federal Workforce Firings Act to

	examine how his mass layoffs undermine essential services. More than 6,000 federal employees in Colorado conduct research, manage public lands, and serve our communities. Reckless cuts threaten their livelihoods, and the economic activity communities depend on. My approach pairs investment with accountability: protect research and workforce development, connect businesses with federal opportunities, and ensure taxpayer dollars deliver results. I will keep listening to employers, researchers, workers, and communities to strengthen District 7's economy and quality of life - and defend the investments that make that possible.
Bennett R	When I was in the army, I was a space officer. So, I was down at Peterson Air Force Base and very, very highly technical. And I've always thought that Colorado should be like a technical hub. Huntsville, Alabama, there's a big fight with Space Force where they were gonna go. And we all know how that turned out. But Colorado should be a technological hub. And when you look at the federal resources that are here in Colorado, that's something we should be able to take advantage of. One of the things that I look at is economic opportunity zones so that you can bring that industry back to Colorado. I think it belongs here.
Hall UPA	The Federal Center is the largest conglomerate of federal agencies outside of Washington DC. So, these businesses should be supported. Certainly, tax money should be put aside to support these institutions rather than prioritizing Argentina's beef & massive amounts of weapons.

END OF 05 · U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 7 NEXT: 06 · COLORADO ATTORNEY GENERAL

06

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 2 OF 8 · STATEWIDE

Colorado Attorney General

Source: Written questionnaire responses.

Jena Griswold	Michael Allen
D	R
Please note that Jena Griswold was unable to submit written responses by our deadline	

Q1 How do you see the role of the Attorney General's office in working with Colorado's business community?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

The Attorney General should view Colorado's business community as a partner in building a strong, competitive economy while protecting consumers. My enforcement philosophy is straightforward: be aggressive with fraud, deception, exploitation, and anti-competitive conduct, but fair and predictable with businesses acting in good faith. Enforcement should be based on clear law, solid evidence, and proportionality, not used to punish political disfavor or create new regulations through lawsuits. As a former consumer protection prosecutor, I know strong enforcement protects responsible businesses as well as consumers by holding bad actors accountable. I would maintain open communication with businesses, provide clarity where possible, and focus resources on intentional misconduct, repeat violations, and conduct that causes real harm. The goal should be a fair marketplace where consumers are protected, honest businesses can compete, and entrepreneurs have confidence that the rules will be applied consistently.

Q2 How would you set priorities for consumer protection enforcement, including fraud, scams, and unfair competition? How would you weigh the impact of enforcement on businesses that are trying to comply?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

I would prioritize cases based on harm, intent, scale, and whether misconduct is repeated or organized. That means aggressively pursuing fraud, scams, elder exploitation, deceptive practices, and anti-competitive conduct that harms consumers or puts honest businesses at a disadvantage. Small businesses deserve particular consideration because they often lack large legal and compliance departments. Enforcement should distinguish between deliberate misconduct and a good-faith mistake by a business trying to follow complicated rules. I favor clear guidance, consistent standards, and proportional enforcement so responsible businesses know what is expected of them. Government

should be tough on bad actors without creating fear or uncertainty for small businesses that are trying to do the right thing. My goal would be to protect consumers, preserve fair competition, and give honest Colorado businesses the confidence to invest, grow, hire, and succeed.

Q3

The Attorney General enforces the Colorado Privacy Act and related data security laws. How would you balance enforcing these laws with helping businesses, especially smaller ones, understand and meet their obligations?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

The Attorney General should lead with clarity, accountability, and an understanding that protecting personal information has real public-safety consequences. Recent events in Colorado, including the exposure of confidential voter information by Griswold's office, demonstrate why data security cannot simply be treated as a compliance exercise. I would provide businesses, especially small businesses, with practical guidance, outreach, and clear expectations so those acting in good faith have a meaningful opportunity to comply. At the same time, the state must hold organizations accountable when inadequate safeguards, intentional misconduct, or repeated violations put Coloradans' private information at risk. Leadership means applying those standards consistently, to private businesses and government alike. My approach would combine clear rules, accessible compliance assistance, proportional enforcement, and real accountability. Protecting Coloradans' personal information should never depend on who holds the data.

Q4

When a business is out of compliance with state law, how do you decide whether to pursue litigation, negotiate a resolution, or issue guidance? Please give an example of when each would be appropriate.

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

I would base enforcement decisions on the seriousness of the violation, the harm caused, intent, compliance history, and whether the business is acting in good faith. Guidance is appropriate when the law is unclear or a business is trying to comply but needs direction. Negotiation makes sense when a violation can be corrected promptly, consumers can be made whole, and the business accepts responsibility and changes its practices. Litigation should be reserved for serious or repeated misconduct, fraud, intentional violations, or cases where a business refuses to comply. For example, a small business struggling with a new regulatory requirement may need guidance. A company that discovers a compliance problem and cooperates may warrant a negotiated resolution. A business that knowingly deceives consumers, ignores warnings, or repeatedly violates the law should expect enforcement. The goal is consistent, proportional enforcement that protects consumers without punishing businesses acting in good faith.

Q5

Beyond enforcement how would your office engage with the business community to address legal and regulatory concerns before they become disputes?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

The Attorney General's Office should engage with Colorado businesses before problems become lawsuits, while keeping consumer protection at the center. I would regularly meet with employers, chambers, trade associations, and small-business organizations to identify unclear requirements, emerging risks, and areas where better guidance can prevent harm. That matters for affordability too. Unnecessary legal uncertainty and avoidable compliance costs can ultimately raise prices for consumers, especially when small businesses are forced to spend resources navigating rules they do not understand. The goal should be clear expectations, strong consumer safeguards, and consistent enforcement. By helping responsible businesses comply before problems escalate, the Attorney General can protect consumers, reduce unnecessary costs, preserve fair competition, and support a healthier business climate without compromising accountability.

Q6

Some businesses report being targeted by abusive legal tactics, such as bad-faith demand letters or serial lawsuits. What role, if any, should the Attorney General's office play in addressing these practices?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

Businesses, especially small businesses, should not be forced to spend limited resources responding to bad-faith demand letters, abusive litigation, or schemes designed primarily to extract settlements. As Attorney General, I would make it a priority to identify and address patterns of abusive conduct when they violate Colorado law. That includes using the office's consumer-protection and fraud authority where appropriate, issuing public guidance about emerging schemes, and working with the General Assembly when statutory gaps leave businesses exposed. Legitimate claims and access to the courts must be protected, but the legal system should never become a tool for harassment or extortion. I would expect the Attorney General's Office to distinguish carefully between valid legal advocacy and demonstrably abusive practices, then act decisively when the evidence supports enforcement. My commitment would be clear: protect consumers, protect honest businesses, and ensure Colorado's legal system is not manipulated for improper gain.

Q7

How would you approach antitrust enforcement in Colorado, and which industries, if any, would you focus on? How would you consider the effects on consumers, workers, and businesses of different sizes?

Griswold
D

No response

Allen
R

Antitrust enforcement should protect consumers, ensure fair competition, expand choice, and help address Colorado's affordability challenges. When unlawful price-fixing, bid-rigging, or anti-competitive conduct raises the cost of housing, health care, food, technology, or other essentials, the Attorney General should act. I would focus on markets where reduced competition has the greatest impact on Colorado families and small businesses. I would also aggressively enforce Colorado's protections against price gouging after natural disasters, when families are most vulnerable and should not face exploitation for necessities, housing, fuel, or rebuilding services. The goal is not to punish successful

companies or legitimate growth. It is to preserve fair competition, protect consumers from exploitation, and ensure small businesses have a fair opportunity to compete. My standard would be evidence, market impact, consumer harm, and the law, with affordability as an important measure of whether competition is working for Coloradans.

END OF 06 · COLORADO ATTORNEY GENERAL

NEXT: 07 · COLORADO SECRETARY OF STATE

07

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 3 OF 8 · STATEWIDE

Colorado Secretary of State

Source: Written questionnaire responses.

Amanda Gonzalez D	James Wiley R	Amanda Campbell AMC Please note that Amanda Campbell was unable to submit written responses by our deadline	Sean Vadney LIB	Celeste Landry CO FWD

Q1 How do you see the role of the Secretary of State's office in working with Colorado's business community?

Gonzalez
D

The Secretary of State's office is often a business owner's first interaction with state government, and that experience should be easy, informative, and welcoming. The office should be a partner to the business community, not a barrier. That means modern systems for filings and registrations, responsive customer service, and a willingness to listen when something isn't working. As Jefferson County Clerk and Recorder, I've built that kind of relationship with the people we serve. We've digitized records back to the 1800s, eliminated backlogs, and earned over 10,000 five-star Google reviews by putting customer service at the center of everything we do. I'd bring that same approach to the Secretary of State's office. The role also goes beyond filings. Businesses thrive in a stable environment, and protecting secure, accessible elections and public trust in our democratic institutions is part of creating that stability.

Wiley
R

Every Colorado business files through the Secretary of State. My job is to treat that office like a utility: fast, clear, and predictable, not a political bottleneck. Main Street shops and growing employers should get the same published timelines, plain-language forms, and honest answers when a filing stalls. At the same time, businesses need elections they can trust. Contested, opaque rules create risk that shows up in hiring and investment. I will run business filings as a service and keep elections citizen-visible, so Colorado's business climate rests on paperwork that works and ballots people can audit.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe the Secretary of State's office should be a partner to Colorado's business community, not an obstacle. As a business owner myself, I understand how important it is to make starting and maintaining a business as simple and affordable as possible. My priorities would include reducing unnecessary fees, cutting red tape, and streamlining the business registration process while maintaining accurate records and protecting against fraud. I would also work closely with small

	business owners and entrepreneurs to identify areas where the office can improve its services. Ultimately, I want Colorado to be a state where entrepreneurship is encouraged, businesses can thrive, and government makes it easier, not harder, for people to succeed.
Landry CO FWD	The Secretary of State's office, i.e., the Colorado Department of State (CDOS), is the repository for business license filings. When I was a manufacturing production scheduler, I earned an APICS (American Production and Inventory Control Society) certification and understand just how important it is to maintain accurate records and to emphasize continuous Improvement. In 2023 the CDOS Business and Licensing Division won the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA) Merit Award for Innovative Customer Service in a Post-Covid World for creating a modernized check-in process. Yay CDOS! I would not sit on CDOS' laurels though; rather I would always have my door open to hear ideas for further improvements. Some different state agencies that also work with businesses include the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Regulatory Agencies, and the Department of Revenue.

Q2 What changes, if any, would you make to Colorado's online business filing and registration system, and how would you keep it fast, affordable, and easy to use?

Gonzalez D	I hear mostly positive feedback from business owners about the current system, and that's worth protecting. Any changes should build on what's working, not start from scratch. I'd focus on continuing to modernize the user experience, making sure forms are intuitive, instructions are clear, and the system works well on any device. I'd also prioritize ongoing conversations with business owners and the organizations that represent them to identify pain points early. Sometimes the biggest improvements aren't dramatic overhauls but small fixes, like clearer error messages, better search functions, or faster processing times. At the Clerk's office, we've found that investing in technology and staff training together is what makes systems work well for people. The best online system in the world doesn't help if there's no one to call when something goes wrong.
Wiley R	I would rebuild the filing experience around published clocks and fewer "gotcha" fields. Filers should know median turnaround for standard entity filings and annual reports, why a filing was rejected, and how to fix it without starting over. Cut redundant steps and mystery queues. Keep fees tied to real operating costs, not surprise surcharges. When process rules change, give notice before the effective date. Affordable means no paid middleman just to complete a form the statute already requires. Easy means plain language, mobile-friendly flows where possible, and a help path that answers in hours, not weeks.
Campbell AMC	No response
Vadney LIB	I believe Colorado's online business filing and registration system should be fast, affordable, and accessible to everyone. As a business owner who has personally gone through the registration process, I understand the importance of keeping things simple. I would focus on completely eliminating unnecessary fees, simplifying forms, and making the website easier to navigate, especially for first-time business owners. I would also explore ways to automate routine processes, improve customer support, and ensure the system is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Landry
CO FWD

I would not make any immediate, unilateral changes to the online filing and registration system. Any substantial changes would be a group decision, involving high-level CDOS staff, the CDOS front-line staff who interact with businesses and/or write and implement the software, and representatives from the Colorado business community. Business filing and registration fees help pay for CDOS' Administrative, IT and Elections Divisions. Elections cost money, partly borne by the local jurisdictions and partly by CDOS. Some communities are clamoring for costly single-winner ranked voting elections, but they might instead consider approval voting – a simple, no-extra-cost voting method that is still more expressive than our choose-one voting method. I would prioritize writing rules for approval voting so that the Littleton, Douglas County and other supporters can more effectively advocate for adoption of approval voting and save money on better elections.

Q3 How would you evaluate the fees and administrative requirements businesses face when registering, renewing, or updating filings? Would you change them, and how would you fund the office's operations?

Gonzalez
D

Fees and requirements should be regularly evaluated to make sure they're reasonable, clearly communicated, and serving a real purpose. If a fee or requirement exists, business owners should understand why. And if something no longer serves a useful purpose, we should simplify or eliminate it. I'd want to hear directly from businesses about where the friction is. Sometimes the burden isn't the fee itself but the process around it, like unclear instructions, confusing timelines, or difficulty reaching someone when there's a problem. The office's operations need to be funded sustainably, and fees are part of that. But we should also be looking at efficiencies that reduce costs. As Clerk, I saved taxpayers $2 million in 2024 by increasing efficiencies in our election processes and returned that money to the county's general fund. I'd bring that same commitment to responsible stewardship to the Secretary of State's office.

Wiley
R

I would publish a clear fee schedule mapped to actual service costs and scrub requirements that add steps without adding security or accuracy. Fees should fund the filing and elections functions Coloradans rely on, not grow a bureaucracy. Where a fee or form field cannot be justified in plain English, it should go. Funding stays inside lawful fee authority and the budget process, I will not invent new taxes from this office. The scoreboard is public: turnaround times, rejection rates for fixable errors, and backlog reporting so businesses can see whether the office is earning what it charges.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I would start by conducting a thorough review of the fees and administrative requirements businesses face when registering, renewing, or updating their filings. My goal would be to identify unnecessary costs, eliminate redundant requirements, and make the process as affordable and straightforward as possible. I believe government should not create unnecessary financial barriers for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Where possible, I would work to reduce fees, simplify paperwork, and streamline administrative processes without compromising the accuracy and security of business records.

Landry
CO FWD

I would assemble a team to evaluate the fees and administrative requirements involved in business filings. Making the fees commensurate with the level of work required for CDOS staff and the value of that work for businesses and the state – while not discouraging valid business filings – seems

appropriate. The fees collected currently fund the Business and Licensing Division as well as some of the costs of the other three CDOS divisions. Just as we want the voter database to be up-to-date, we want the business database to be up-to-date. I'd also like to consider improvements to the business database to make searches more user-friendly and useful. Registering and filing with CDOS takes time and money. Since "time is money" in business, I'd prioritize making the online process as simple as possible, ensuring businesses don't have extra, irrelevant steps. I would consider reducing or waiving fees for small or new businesses.

Q4

The Secretary of State oversees elections run by Colorado's county clerks. What would you do to keep elections secure, accurate, and trusted by voters across the political spectrum?

Gonzalez
D

Colorado already has one of the most secure election systems in the country, and that's the result of years of investment by clerks and election workers across the state. My job would be to protect and build on that foundation: staying ahead of evolving threats with strong cybersecurity, supporting county clerks with training and resources, and continuing Colorado's practices like risk-limiting audits, bipartisan election judges, and paper ballot verification. Trust is just as important as security. At the Clerk's office, I created a community advisory board with members from across the political spectrum to help shape our work, and I'd expand that model statewide. When people can see the process for themselves and have a voice in it, trust follows. I also believe the Secretary should be honest and accessible, answering questions directly rather than letting misinformation fill the gap.

Wiley
R

Restore elections Coloradans can see. Day One direction: one day of voting for in-state voters, government-issued voter ID, paper ballots, and hand counts where clerks choose, with strict chain of custody and citizen observers. Continuously audit and clean voter rolls of deceased, duplicates, and non-citizens, with citizenship checks at registration, while protecting every eligible voter. Pair statewide security standards with home-rule authority for county clerks who know their counties. Trust comes from paper, observers, and published procedures, not from asking anyone to take the machines' word for it.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe the Secretary of State's office has a responsibility to ensure that every election in Colorado is fair, secure, accurate, and accessible. I would work closely with county clerks from across the state to maintain consistent election standards while respecting their responsibility to administer elections locally. My priorities would include strengthening cybersecurity, maintaining accurate voter registration records, conducting regular election audits, and ensuring that election equipment and procedures meet established security standards. I would also emphasize transparency by making election procedures, audit findings, and relevant data easily accessible to the public.

Landry
CO FWD

Having a nonpartisan Secretary of State would be a great first step to gaining trust by voters across the political spectrum. I'm the nominee of the Forward Party, a political party that is about as nonpartisan as a party can be. Meanwhile, Colorado will have about a dozen nonpartisan county clerks in 2027 compared to five in 2023. Colorado elections have many safeguards in place already. BallotTrax lets voters monitor the status of their ballot. All but one small county uses machine tabulation, which is more accurate than hand counting. The public may observe the pre-election Logic

and Accuracy Tests and the post-election risk-limiting audits which together ensure that the machine tabulation is correct. Electronic ballot return is limited to only those voters who truly need it. County clerks and I have discussed ways to close two known security gaps, one in mail ballots and one in election audits.

Q5 How would you balance public transparency with privacy for business owners whose names and addresses appear in state filings?

Gonzalez
D

Public records serve an important purpose. They protect consumers, help people verify who they're doing business with, and support accountability. At the same time, I understand the concerns, especially for home-based business owners whose personal addresses are in public filings. Working in the elections space, the need for protection of voters and election workers information has continued to evolve. It needs to continue to evolve for business owners as well. I'd want to work with the business community and the legislature to explore options that maintain transparency while reducing unnecessary exposure of personal information. The key is being thoughtful about what information truly needs to be public and what's exposed simply because we've always done it that way.

Wiley
R

Colorado's business records exist so the public and counterparties can know who stands behind an entity. That transparency stays. Privacy means we do not expose more than statute requires, we fight filing fraud that hijacks someone's identity, and we give owners a fast path to correct false records. I support clear notice of what is public, strong authentication before agents or addresses change, and rapid response when someone reports a fraudulent filing. Open books for accountability; locked doors against identity theft. Both are SOS duties.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe the Secretary of State's office must balance public transparency with protecting the personal privacy of Colorado business owners. Public access to business records is important for accountability, preventing fraud, and maintaining trust, but business owners should not have to sacrifice unnecessary personal information simply to operate a business. I would review what information is currently required to be publicly disclosed and identify opportunities to better protect sensitive personal information, particularly residential addresses. I would also explore ways to make it easier for business owners to use alternative mailing addresses where legally permitted, while ensuring that law enforcement and appropriate agencies can still access necessary information. Ultimately, my goal would be to maintain accurate and transparent business records while respecting individual privacy and ensuring that government requirements do not unnecessarily expose business owners to risks.

Landry
CO FWD

Every business on record with the Secretary of State must have a registered agent with a physical address in Colorado. The registered agent receives service of process and other legal documents. All professional registered agents for hire should have their address publicly on file, but perhaps Colorado should allow other registered agents to have their address behind a wall that CDOS staff can access during business hours when presented with an appropriate legal document. In almost all cases, business owners' names and business addresses should appear in state filings. Some exceptions might be appropriate for businesses dealing with highly sensitive matters and which also have a need to keep a low profile. Having a back-up address, such as next-of-kin or the business' attorney's office, makes sense, in case the business property is destroyed by a natural or human-caused disaster.

Q6 How would you improve the way the office communicates filing deadlines, compliance requirements, and policy changes to businesses?

Gonzalez
D

Businesses shouldn't have to go looking for the information they need to stay in compliance. The office should be proactive, communicating deadlines, changes, and requirements through multiple channels: email reminders, an updated website, and partnerships with business associations and chambers of commerce. I've heard from a lot of business owners that they're already pretty happy with how the Secretary's Office is supporting them, and also there are some great ideas out there for how we can continue to improve. I don't ever want government to make someone feel dumb, which is why it's been so important to me in my work as Clerk to focus on clear, plain-language communication. You shouldn't need a lawyer to navigate our processes. I've invested in making my office's communications clear and accessible. And I know it's working, because we're measuring the improvements we're seeing. I'd bring that same approach to the Secretary of State's office.

Wiley
R

Publish plain-language calendars for annual reports and common deadlines. Send advance notice when rules or forms change, before the effective date, not after a rejection. Maintain a single public page for process changes, backlog status, and contact paths. Offer email/SMS opt-in reminders for filers who want them. Stop burying material updates in jargon. Businesses should not need a lobbyist to learn when a form changed. Measure success by fewer surprise rejections and fewer "I never heard about that" calls.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe the Secretary of State's office should communicate clearly, consistently, and proactively with Colorado businesses. Business owners should not have to navigate complicated government websites or confusing regulations just to understand their responsibilities. I would prioritize improving email reminders, providing clear notifications about upcoming filing deadlines, and making compliance information easier to find and understand. I would also ensure that policy changes are communicated well in advance whenever possible, using plain language rather than unnecessary legal terminology. Additionally, I would seek feedback directly from business owners to identify communication gaps and improve customer service. My goal would be to make compliance as simple and straightforward as possible, allowing entrepreneurs to spend less time dealing with government requirements and more time growing their businesses.

Landry
CO FWD

First, I would ask for a report on the current communication protocol and for any public feedback on that protocol. I provided feedback to CDOS Campaign Finance Support on July 12. I noted that the IRS mileage reimbursement rate suddenly increased from 72.5 cents/mile to 76 cents/mile, backdated to July 1, and suggested that CDOS should alert "candidates, issue committees, businesses, etc." I don't know if there was any such communication. I also informed a journalist who files mileage reports whose employer hadn't said anything. Full communication of changes and deadlines is part of providing good public service. Open communication builds trust. I know that there have been communication hiccups in the CDOS Election Division. I have been meeting with the county clerks to develop relationships with them, build trust, and assure them that we are working on the same team. I would do likewise with businesses.

Q7 If a business believes a filing was wrongly rejected, delayed, or flagged, what process should be available to resolve it, and would you change the current one?

Gonzalez
D

There should be a clear, accessible process for any business that believes a filing was handled incorrectly. That starts with responsive customer service: someone who can look into the issue quickly, explain what happened, and help resolve it. No one should have to navigate a bureaucratic maze to get a straight answer. To understand what's working and what's not, I'll need the experts– the users–to share their experiences. At the Clerk's Office, I started a community advisory board to inform exactly these kinds of changes and conversations, and it's been immeasurably helpful to have their insight to help make good decisions. So, if there are gaps in the current process, we should fix them, and we should fix them with the folks who understand them best.

Wiley
R

Every disputed filing should get a ticket number, a named contact, a published response clock, and a written reason tied to the statute or rule. Escalate to a supervisor on a fixed timeline. If the office was wrong, fix it and note the correction. If the filer must amend, say exactly what field failed. I would replace opaque black-hole delays with that tracked appeals path and publish aggregate metrics so the public can see whether disputes are resolved in days or buried for months.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe every Colorado business should have access to a fair, transparent, and timely process for resolving filing disputes. If a filing is rejected, delayed, or flagged, the business owner should receive a clear explanation of the issue and straightforward instructions for correcting it or requesting a review. I would evaluate the current process to identify unnecessary delays and opportunities for improvement. I would support a streamlined appeals process with reasonable response deadlines, accessible customer service, and the ability to have disputed decisions reviewed by a qualified staff member rather than relying solely on automated systems. My goal would be to ensure that businesses are treated fairly, mistakes are corrected quickly, and legitimate fraud prevention measures do not create unnecessary obstacles for entrepreneurs.

Landry
CO FWD

I am not familiar with the current process for challenging a filing and resolving that challenge, but my APICS certification has prepared me to seek efficient, win-win solutions. Perhaps CDOS should assign a specific staff person to closely monitor the challenge and provide daily status reports to the business. Government is often criticized for being slow and bureaucratic in contrast to a nimble, flexible business. I have a much bigger sense of urgency than most people, and I don't want to unnecessarily tie the hands of CDOS staff. I am always looking for ways to improve processes and would do so for challenging a filing status. The CDOS core values are • To serve • To innovate • To act with integrity • To strive for excellence • To be inclusive. I take the values seriously.

Q8 Fraudsters sometimes file false changes to a company's records, such as its registered agent or address, to commit identity theft or fraud. What would you do to prevent and respond to business identity theft through state filings?

Gonzalez
D

Business identity theft is a real and growing problem, and the Secretary of State's office has a responsibility to both prevent it and respond quickly when it happens. This is an area I'm watching closely and want to move quickly on. On prevention, I'll be looking at verification safeguards and what

we can learn from other sectors. The DMV is dealing with increasing vehicle title fraud, Records & Licensing offices are dealing with home title fraud–it's not an isolated issue. There's a lot of potential to learn from what's working with notification systems that alert business owners to changes, monitoring tools, and more. On response, businesses that discover fraudulent filings need a fast, clear process to correct their records and protect themselves. We'll treat these cases with urgency and continue to shore up processes to protect our business owners. I've dealt with a lot of fraud prevention as Clerk. I'm also a former CEO and business owner. This is another area I'm passionate about and can bring my experience to at the state level.

Wiley
R

Require stronger authentication before registered-agent or address changes post. Flag high-risk changes for secondary verification. Give owners a one-stop fraud report line with same-day triage and a freeze option while we investigate. Coordinate with law enforcement when criminal fraud is clear. Restore correct records fast and keep an audit trail of who changed what. Prevention is authentication and alerts; response is speed and rollback. Business identity theft through SOS filings is a security failure, and I will treat it that way.

Campbell
AMC

No response

Vadney
LIB

I believe protecting Colorado businesses from identity theft and fraudulent filings should be a priority for the Secretary of State's office. Business owners should have confidence that their records are secure and cannot be changed fraudulently without their knowledge. I would focus on strengthening account security, expanding notifications when changes are made to business records, and exploring additional verification measures for sensitive filings, such as changes to registered agents or business addresses. These protections should be designed to prevent fraud without creating unnecessary costs or delays for legitimate business owners. When fraudulent activity is reported, I would prioritize a clear and timely process for investigating disputed filings, correcting inaccurate records, and coordinating with law enforcement when appropriate. I would also work to educate business owners about common scams and ways to protect their information. Ultimately, my goal would be to maintain a secure and reliable filing system that protects businesses while remaining affordable, accessible, and easy to use.

Landry
CO FWD

A disclaimer on the Business Database Search webpage reads, "The Secretary of State's Office acts as a filing registry for businesses. This office lacks the authority to certify if a business is operating legally." The disclaimer does not state what fraud investigations CDOS may or may not undertake. In 2026 the CO legislature passed HB26-1088 which allows the SOS to remove or mark business entities as fraudulent when certain conditions are met. The number of entities marked fraudulent rose from ~7,700 in the previous 3½ years to ~20,500 since the bill took effect; additionally, more than 10,000 entities were removed from the database. Since this legislative authority is less than 1 year old, CDOS should continue to monitor progress. I would like to know if fewer fraudulent filings happen over time or if we are just cleaning up the records at the back end.

END OF 07 · COLORADO SECRETARY OF STATE

NEXT: 08 · JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 3

08

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 4 OF 8 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Commissioner, District 3

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Lisa Cutter D	Stephanie VandenBerg R

Q1

Businesses and developers often cite permitting and development review timelines as a factor in whether they invest in a community. How would you evaluate the county's process, and what changes, if any, would you make?

Cutter
D

Proposition 123 created new requirements for affordable housing in Colorado, including an expedited permitting process. So, can we replicate for other permitting processes? Can we replicate that? And Jeffco recently introduced an app to schedule permit reviews in the building safety division, cutting the waiting time by one half of what it was. Pretty remarkable. And they're also exploring more automation using limited AI and paring down the number of zoning codes. We should continue to explore, replicate, and build on these processes and efficiencies whenever possible.They're really sensible ways to streamline this process and make it easier on businesses without compromising standards.

VandenBerg
R

So according to the documents that I found on the county website, the residential building permit checklist, the planning and zoning review takes about three to six weeks. This timeline assumes that all the required documents are turned in and are correct at submission. The online portal provides a decent place for an individual permit process and timeline. However, the six week documented timeline, in my opinion, is not realistic. I've worked with builders and contractors in my work and enough to know that there's almost always something that needs to be reviewed or corrected. The county should put in place a dashboard with realistic timelines, like an average time to completion. And if there's a backlog, that should be noted. In simple terms, when you reserve a book at the library, it tells you you're number 10 with 15 books available. Something like that would be very helpful to businesses.

Q2

Counties across Colorado face budget pressures. How would you balance the county budget while maintaining the services businesses rely on, such as roads and public safety, and what is your approach to county taxes and fees?

Cutter
D

We need to be mindful of spending pressures and budget conservatively. Thinking about the future and not outgrowing our capacity so we don't create a structural deficit like as you may have heard, there is at the state right now. The county is in pretty good shape with the passage of 1A, which made it possible to accept state grants among other good things about it. The county doesn't need to

contemplate new taxes or fees in the near future. More to the point is the assessment rate and the increase in home values, which increases the amount of taxes you pay. Two issues are largely impacting these assessments, wildfire risk and the lack of affordable housing, which is driving up the values of the available stock.

VandenBerg
R

First, I would work to improve the overall budget process. Zero based budgeting is probably not realistic in this instance, but I would do a modified approach, applying some, similar principles to the project. Just because the department gets, say, a $100,000 this year doesn't mean that they automatically get a $100,000 next year, plus their inflationary budget, plus their added expenses. We need to justify every single dollar that we currently spend and then justify every single dollar that we're asking for. What programs are essential and what programs need increased funding? We need to take a systematic approach to all of that. We need to protect the reserves, something Jeffco has not done well historically. When you constantly run a deficit in your budget and spend extra money that doesn't really exist, that money doesn't appear out of thin air. Contrary to what people think, we don't just print money. When we run a deficit, that money gets pulled from our reserves.

Q3 What role should county government play in economic development, including retaining and attracting employers, workforce housing and child care, and working with economic development partners?

Cutter
D

The role of county government should be to support economic development in any way possible. And as you stated in the question, there's just many factors impacting that. I am really impressed with Arvada's B.O.L.D initiative, collaboration and community investment as a way to support economic development. When I was running my strategic communications firm, I often worked with businesses on P3s and other community projects and investments. We all have a stake in the outcome, it's important that we work together to achieve that. I understand that Jeffco EDC is now looking to adopt a similar initiative, and I hope to be part of forwarding that.

VandenBerg
R

The county doesn't need more government. We need safe communities, good roads, reasonable taxes, health and human services, and affordable living. If we get those right, people and businesses can thrive here. Zoning and housing regulations create barriers for affordable housing growth, and the county should look at zoning and permitting for home, faith, and employer-based childcare programs. If the barriers are too steep, we lose childcare providers. The state, county, and cities need to be more aligned in their processes. I have seen many businesses close because the rules are too hard to follow, and they feel the government is making it intentionally harder for them to operate. And I would be remiss if I failed to mention Senator Cutter's legislation on low NOx water heaters, which instantly increased the price of water heaters by 30%. We felt that personally. Those prices flow down to businesses and then into the customers.

END OF 08 · JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 3

NEXT: 09 · JEFFERSON COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER

09

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 5 OF 8 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Clerk & Recorder

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Nicole Hensel D	Paul Poston R

Q1

Businesses such as auto dealers, fleet operators and title companies rely on the Clerk's motor vehicle and recording services every day. How would you improve wait times, online options and service for these high-volume users?

Hensel
D

The government should serve us and make our lives easier. And there's two ways that Clerks can address this issue. First, it's by improving customer service, and second, it's for advocating for change and legislation. So as Clerk, I would ensure that high volume users have unique appointment slots and are assigned to specific customer service representatives that are able and understand their needs implicitly and can address them in a timely fashion. And I can promise that I will always have an open door to the business community to hear your feedback on how we can improve our customer service. But the reality is that clerk's offices are often, boundaried by the Department of Revenue when it comes to motor vehicle services. And I'm committed to working with the Department of Revenue to modernize our systems, to move more features online, to open access to things like automatic registration.

Poston
R

I would streamline the process for the high volume users.

Q2

Property and deed fraud, where someone files false documents to claim or borrow against a property, is a growing concern for owners and lenders. What would you do to prevent it and to help victims when it happens?

Hensel
D

Property and deed fraud is deeply concerning especially for our older residents who are already targets of fraud. Clerk's offices often use systems like property alerts. They're similar to our ballot tracking alerts or emergency response systems where you can get an automatic notification when there's any activity on your property so that the sooner you know, the sooner you can act. Also, the Clerk's office is already out in the community registering voters, educating about the clerk's office. I would use that as an opportunity to educate on the dangers of property and deed fraud and encourage people to sign up for these alert systems. In terms of enforcement, I would work really closely with the appropriate law enforcement agency, whether it's the sheriff, the local DA, or the attorney general consumer protection division to make sure victims are supported and that harm is repaired.

Poston
R

I would have the clerk's office notify the owners and lenders whenever their property records are accessed. That way they have a little bit of lead time to respond should something happen.

Q3

How would you keep the Jefferson County elections secure, accurate and transparent, and build confidence in them among voters of all political views?

Hensel
D

Democracy works best when we all show up no matter your political party or ideology. Everyone's voice must be heard for us to have a government that represents you. We already have secure, accurate, and transparent elections, and I'm gonna work with voters of all political parties and ideologies to build trust in our democratic processes. If you've ever worked as a poll worker, you will see the beauty of people from opposing political parties working together to make sure that every vote is counted. Yet we know that election disinformation and lies are undermining public trust, and we don't have a democracy if we lose public trust. I also have a deep investment in our schools and our young people. I wanna work with students all across Jefferson County to help them to design and execute mock elections so they can see for themselves what it looks like to build a transparent process.

Poston
R

I would have the Clerk's office pre-verify that all addresses are deliverable. When the post office gets the ballots, they are supposed to mail them out. But when the address is not deliverable, that voter is not getting their ballot. If the post office can determine that an address is not deliverable, then why can't the Clerk's office verify ahead of time with the post office to verify that all addresses are deliverable. It wastes money in the printing of ballots that cannot be delivered, and the voter does not get their ballot, which is something that needs to be fixed.

END OF 09 · JEFFERSON COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER

NEXT: 10 · JEFFERSON COUNTY TREASURER

10

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 6 OF 8 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Treasurer

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Eric Proctor D	Murl Hendrickson LP Please note that Murl Hendrickson was unable to attend this event and unable to submit written responses

Q1 How would you make property tax bills, payment options and deadlines easier for business owners to understand and manage, including for business personal property?

Proctor
D

So, I think it's really, as a former schoolteacher, but it's education, education, education. So, whether that's on the county treasurer's website, whether that's through brochures, whether that's through Kiwanis, any club you can get in front of, just let people know. But I think one thing that would be really positive is for the Arvada Chamber and other chambers across the county to have a direct link on their website that coordinates with the county treasurer's website where business owners and property taxpayers can get that information directly. Also, the county assessor, maybe similar links would be really positive.

Hendrickson
LP

No response

Q2 The Treasurer invests county funds on behalf of taxpayers. How would you balance safety, access to cash and return, and how would you report results to the public?

Proctor
D

So, the county treasurer currently has a very, very strong quality and safety and soundness measures that every investment has to meet. I want to continue that continuity from the current Treasurer's Office. Also does a very good job with transparency, but I think there's ways to expand upon that.

Hendrickson
LP

No response

Q3 When property owners, including small businesses, fall behind on property taxes, what options would your office offer before the property reaches a tax lien sale?

Proctor
D

Again, the current county treasurer, his priority is to keep people in their homes. And I think continuing that is a good, both ethical and moral thing to do. But you've got to find the balance right between the fiduciary responsibility of collecting the tax and finding that harmony between the fiduciary responsibility and providing grace and loving your neighbor and ensuring that you're doing everything

you can to keep that person in their home. So, whether that's waiving late interest, whether that's working on property payment deferments within reason, I think that's a good place where government and loving your neighbor can find harmony together.

Hendrickson
LP

No response

END OF 10 · JEFFERSON COUNTY TREASURER

NEXT: 11 · JEFFERSON COUNTY ASSESSOR

11

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 7 OF 8 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Assessor

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Andy Kerr	Vera King	Greg Ketcham
D	R	UAF
	Please note that Vera King was unable to attend this event and unable to submit written responses	

Q1

Commercial property owners will receive new valuations in the 2027 reappraisal. How would you ensure those values are accurate, and how would you explain the methods and data behind them to owners?

Kerr
D

One thing that I've done as a commissioner is that we actually made sure that the Assessor's office has the funds necessary for a new software system that will help in that. And we really wanna make sure that commercial appraisals and individual appraisals are done with the most modern technology and also human beings, real life human beings overseeing that process as well. And I definitely wanna make sure that we continue to implement that software as efficiently as possible and also make sure that we have the right people overseeing that process as well.

King
R

No response

Ketcham
UAF

For me, ensuring that those values for 2027 are accurate comes down to, I have set up the modeling for commercial properties. I have an appraiser's license, so I know exactly what our commercial department is going through because I am currently there right now. I've set values for 2025, for 2023, for 2021, 2019 throughout the county. And I know that we do have some mistakes, but we have licensed appraisers throughout our office that work on that and they work on it every two years. And we have modelers and we have those professionals and we have all of those years' experience.

Q2

Many small business owners find the valuation appeal process hard to navigate without hiring a consultant. What would you do to make appeals clearer and more accessible?

Kerr
D

Definitely our small businesses, our individual property owners should not have to hire somebody else to take them through the process. And that's actually why the Commissioners did agree to fund a new position in the Assessor's office. Again, a real live human being to work with new software, but to be that person, to be that human being that can help and assist those small businesses through that process. So, I think that's important. Yes. We're gonna be using the latest technology, and we're gonna have real life human beings that know what they're doing overseeing that process.

King
R

No response

Ketcham
UAF

Our appeals process has slowly shifted ever since COVID to like mostly online, all online, that kind of thing. And whether it's just a taxpayer, property owner, or a commercial business, our website is very thorough, but it doesn't have a lot of bullet points and so it's really hard to navigate. And we have a plethora of information, but I think we need it to be a lot easier for people to find out how to appeal, what to appeal, what the values are, and how they were derived on our website and that's our online focus. And then when people are calling into our office, we need to speak plainly and in plain English rather than in appraisal terms

Q3

Business personal property tax requires businesses to report equipment and furnishings every year. What would you do within the Assessor's authority to reduce the filing burden, particularly for small businesses?

Kerr
D

You know, Jefferson County's in a bit of a special place here. The county, while the Assessor's office does the assessments and does help in the collection with the Treasurer in business personal property tax, the county itself doesn't take that money in. It's only the school district and special districts that actually still collect that money. We definitely need to make sure that the system is as smooth as possible. If you're under $56,000 you shouldn't need to file more than once, and we need to, going back to Eric Proctor where he said education, education, education, we need to make sure that we're communicating that out.

King
R

No response

Ketcham
UAF

You took my line. Education, education, education. When the assessor's not out in the community at the Metro District meetings, at the, you know, chamber of commerce meetings, talking with businesses, talking with these local businesses and these smaller businesses to get across how to file your business personal property declarations the first time and every time after that. We lose a lot of people in the weeds because they're just confused by either how to online file, how to file in person, or whether they need to file because they are less than that $56,000.This kinda goes back to just our online presence as well as our in-person presence as well. And we need to be more proactive with how we're telling small businesses how to file.

END OF 11 · JEFFERSON COUNTY ASSESSOR

NEXT: 12 · JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF

12

CANDIDATE Q&A · RACE 8 OF 8 · JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Sheriff

Source: County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026.

Reggie (Regina) Marinelli D	Randal Doizaki R

Q1

Retail theft, vehicle break-ins and other property crimes affect businesses' costs and their ability to operate. How would you prioritize these crimes, and how would you work with businesses to prevent them?

Marinelli
D

I hate to sound like a broken record here, but education. Education has to be a priority. We have to get out there with the businesses and educate them on how to protect themselves. A lot of that is through...We have community resource deputies that go out and work with the businesses, whether it be lighting of the business, things out front to keep people from ramming into the businesses, cameras, so on and so forth. The vehicle break ins is a little different because those are more of citizens versus businesses, but our social media platforms need to be very intense on educating people on what the higher crimes are that are happening in the area, the rates that those crimes are happening, and why. If people are breaking into your car because you don't lock it, then we need to educate people to lock your vehicles, so on and so forth.

Doizaki
R

Beyond the education, for me, it's the same thing I tell the officers right now at DPS and I told my entire career Arapahoe County. Five words or less. The officers need to get out and connect with the community. I cannot tell you the last time an officer came through our community living unincorporated down by Chatfield. I tell the officers now, five words or less, get out and engage. Talk to people in the school. Talk to people in the community. You may know something that you're telling us or you may know something. You may know something. And then we put that puzzle together. It starts with the boots on the ground. And that's what I have always led. And that's what I encourage officers to do now. We've got to be better integrated and incorporated into what's going on in the community to see those little pieces.

Q2

How would you recruit and retain deputies and detention staff, and what response times should businesses and residents in unincorporated Jefferson County expect?

Marinelli
D

So, recruiting and retention of deputies. When I came on as sheriff, I realized that our recruiting staff had never been fully staffed. We were short and that's where they would pull people from. In order to look at our recruiting and retention, I made sure that we were fully staffed in the recruiting area and so that we could go after those hundreds of people that apply to different jobs throughout the sheriff's department and also be able to do the background checks for all of those. So, the recruiting and retention of our deputies right now has really advanced in the last three and a half, almost four years,

because we now are to a point where by December 31st, we are very close to having every deputy that we are authorized hired with Jefferson County Sheriff's Department and that hasn't always been the case. Response times work through dispatch, and we constantly strategize for the placement of deputies in the deployment based on the needs of the community.

Doizaki
R

I'll make the first part short and simple. Troops eat first. My capstone of my graduate degree is at employee development. You can have the best pay. You can have the most advanced equipment. But if the employees do not feel valued and an opportunity to grow and develop, they're gonna look elsewhere. I've seen that. So, my passion is who's coming next. As far as response times and should residents in unincorporated Jefferson County expect, honestly, we can look at all the data we want. The officers have gotta be available. We've gotta be able to prioritize and look at how they're spread out. If they're handling some of these certain calls that may not be a priority. I was 11 years old. My family was held hostage. I understand violent crime. But we've got to be able to empathize with all the victims. And if we're not getting out there and working, we're not doing our job.

Q3

Businesses often call for help with situations involving people experiencing homelessness, mental health crises or substance use. How would your office respond, and what partnerships would you rely on?

Marinelli
D

So, right now we are building our co-responder program. It used to be with Jefferson Center for Mental Health. We have recently, in the last three months, pulled that back to the sheriff's office. So, these will be our employees moving forward. We're currently writing the policy on that, and we will have case management reviews and follow-ups with the co-responder program. They will work hand-in-hand with human services, the health department, and also nonprofits to make sure that those citizens facing the homelessness and mental health crisis and also the substance abuse have a connection with our agency that will continue past the contact and we will be able to supply resources for them to be able to get their feet under them and back on the ground again.

Doizaki
R

This is a tough one. Working in DPS, I see these challenges not just with our community but with our youth. I would refer back to the work I did with Arapahoe County working with the State Office of Behavioral Health. And the transition, the eye opener it took for that to happen and bringing them in. I'm seeing that with the officers now, the CIT programs, all the different programs that are out there. But for me, it goes back to that comment earlier about that collaboration, that partnership, that getting out there. The team I've got now, we're already talking about that and where we can build those partnerships. The State Office of Behavioral Health ran a program in Arapahoe County dealing with individuals in custody with mental health diagnosis not able to continue with trial. That was a paradigm shift for a lot of us.

END OF 12 · JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF

NEXT: 13 · VOTER AND ELECTION RESOURCES

13

RESOURCES

Jefferson County Voter and Election Resources

Key dates

Monday, October 19, 2026	Vote centers open
Monday, October 26, 2026	Last day to mail your ballot
Monday, October 26, 2026	Last day to register to vote and still be mailed a ballot
Tuesday, November 3, 2026	Election Day, last day to vote

Voter resources

Register to vote	https://www.sos.state.co.us/voter/pages/pub/olvr/verifyNewVoter.xhtml
Track your ballot	https://www.jeffco.us/3313/Track-Your-Ballot
Jeffco voter information (voting locations, what's on the ballot, election security and more)	https://www.jeffco.us/elections

Candidate Forum Videos

Recordings and additional information from the 2026 candidate forums:

County and Federal Candidate Forum, September 25, 2026

Jeffco EDC does not endorse candidates at any level but is grateful for the participation of all the candidates and local officials to further develop a critical dialogue within the region to help ensure success for all involved. Learn more about Jeffco EDC at jeffcoedc.org.