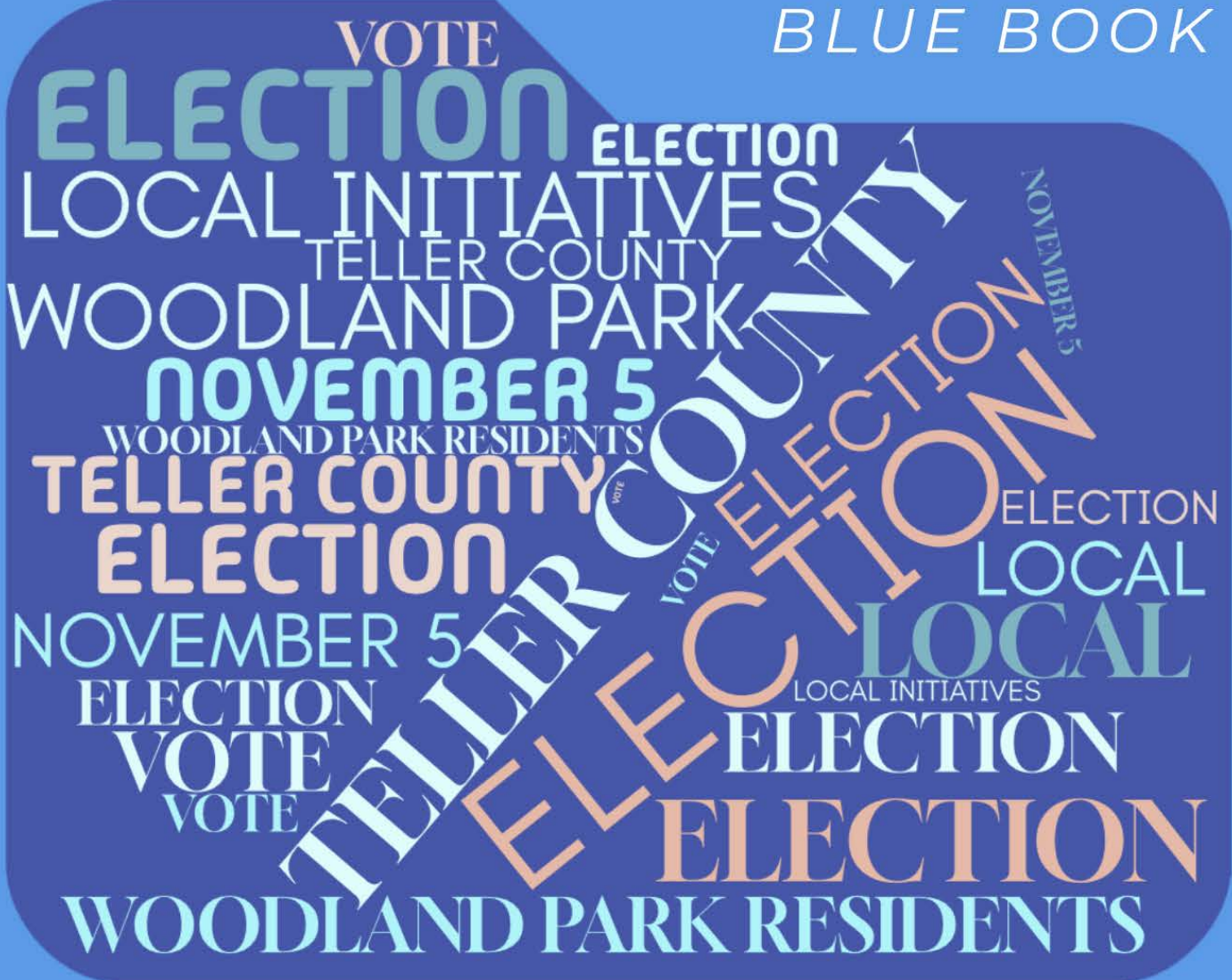


October 2024

Local Initiative - Teller County & Woodland Park, CO

# CHAMBER

*BLUE BOOK*



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## SUMMARY

On November 5, 2024, registered voters in Woodland Park and Teller County, Colorado may vote on four local ballot questions. Two of the ballot questions – Ballot Question 1A & 1 B will be on ALL Teller County ballots. Ballot Question 2A will appear ONLY on the ballots of Woodland Park residents (those living in the WP City limits). Ballot Question 7A1 will appear on ballots where residents reside within the Ute Pass Regional Health District boundaries.

The following analysis, constructed by the Greater Woodland Park Chamber of Commerce, is intended to provide an objective overview of the four initiatives on the ballot. For each initiative, neutral explanations are provided, including the ballot question, arguments for and against, and an outline of potential fiscal impacts. The Chamber does not evaluate the merits of these arguments nor does it guarantee their validity. This information is offered as a resource to help voters make informed decisions.

### **Teller County Ballot Question 1A**

Shall limitations on the terms of office of two consecutive four-year terms be eliminated for the Teller County coroner as authorized by Article XVIII, Section 11, of the Colorado Constitution?

#### **What Your Vote Means**

**YES:** The elected county coroner may serve more than two, four-year terms if re-elected.

**NO:** The elected county coroner may only serve two, four-year terms, if re-elected for a second term.

#### **Summary and Analysis**

In 1994, the state of Colorado enacted a state constitutional amendment that set term limits for any non-judicial officer at the local level. The amendment was approved by Colorado citizens in the general election that year, and imposed a three-term limit on all county positions with a term of two years or less. The term limit was set to two terms for any county officer whose term is longer than two years. The amendment also included a section that allows voters in local governments to lengthen, shorten, or eliminate term limits in their jurisdiction. Since the amendment was enacted, according to information from Colorado Counties Inc., 49 of the 64 counties have lifted term limits for one or more of their elected officials.

**Argument For 1A:** Coroners handle complex tasks related to determining the cause of death, often requiring years to build expertise in forensic science, medical knowledge, and investigative procedures. Eliminating term limits allows coroners to accumulate experience, enhancing their ability to perform effectively.

- Long-serving coroners develop valuable institutional knowledge, improving efficiency and understanding of local trends.
- New coroners require time to learn the role, while experienced coroners maintain continuity and investigation quality.
- Eliminating term limits ensures continuity of service, reducing operational disruptions and maintaining investigation standards.
- In areas with limited qualified candidates, removing term limits allows experienced coroners to continue serving without forced turnover.

**Argument Against 1A:** By keeping term limits for county coroners, the public can ensure a healthy rotation of leadership, introduce new ideas and innovations, and maintain a check on the concentration of power in a single office. This helps preserve public trust, foster adaptability, and promote higher standards in public service.

- Term limits prevent entrenchment, ensuring coroners remain accountable and responsive to the public.
- Regular turnover promotes the incorporation of modern forensic practices and investigative techniques.
- Term limits help prevent potential abuse of power by breaking long-standing relationships with local agencies.
- Periodic turnover creates checks on performance, ensuring coroners remain focused and effective in their duties.

**Fiscal Impact for:** Not applicable

### **Teller County Ballot Question 1B**

Shall limitations on the terms of office of two consecutive four-year terms be eliminated for the Teller County surveyor as authorized by Article XVIII, Section 11, of the Colorado Constitution

#### **What Your Vote Means**

**YES:** The elected county surveyor may serve more than two, four-year terms if re-elected.

**NO:** The elected county surveyor may only serve two, four-year terms, if re-elected for a second term.

**Summary and Analysis:** In 1994, the state of Colorado enacted a state constitutional amendment that set term limits for any non-judicial officer at the local level. The amendment was approved by Colorado citizens in the general election that year and imposed a three-term limit on all county positions with a term of two years or less. The term limit was set to two terms for any county officer whose term is longer than two years. The amendment also included a section that allows voters in local governments to lengthen, shorten, or eliminate term limits in their jurisdiction. Since the amendment was enacted, according to information from Colorado Counties Inc., 49 of the 64 counties have lifted term limits for one or more of their elected officials.

**Arguments For 1B:** By eliminating term limits for a county surveyor, counties can benefit from the continuity of service, deeper expertise, and the ability to maintain long-term planning and relationships, all of which are critical to effective land surveying and infrastructure development.

- County surveyors require technical expertise in land laws, engineering, and geography, developed over years of service.
- Long-serving surveyors gain valuable knowledge of local terrain, regulations, and infrastructure, Enhancing effectiveness.
- Large, complex projects benefit from stability, allowing surveyors to oversee long-term initiatives without disruption.
- Eliminating term limits reduces transition periods and costs associated with onboarding new surveyors, ensuring continuity.
- Regular elections provide public oversight, allowing voters to replace ineffective surveyors without arbitrary term limits.
- Long-term planning, policy continuity, and collaboration with stakeholders improve when experienced surveyors remain in office.

**Arguments Against 1B:** There are compelling arguments in favor of imposing term limits for county surveyors. These arguments emphasize accountability, fresh perspectives, and the prevention of potential abuses of power or complacency.

- Term limits prevent long-term incumbency, reducing the risk of entrenchment and promoting accountability to the public.
- Regular rotation of surveyors encourages the introduction of new ideas, practices, and updated technologies.
- Term limits reduce the incumbent's advantage by regularly opening the position to new candidates and fostering competition.
- Term limits provide a regular opportunity for the public to evaluate the surveyor's performance and consider new leadership.
- Limiting time in office reduces the risk of power consolidation and potential conflicts of interest or corruption.
- Regular turnover through term limits mitigates public concerns of cronyism and favoritism.

**Fiscal Impact:** Not Applicable

## **Ballot Question 2A: (Woodland Park Residents Who Live Within City Limits)**

Shall the City of Woodland Park's 1.09% Sales Tax, the Proceeds of Which are Annually Turned Over to the Woodland Park School District, be Repealed, Where the Effect of a "YES" vote is to Repeal the Tax, and the Effect of a "NO" Vote is to Continue the Tax?

### **What Your Vote Means**

**YES** A "yes" vote on 2A **repeals** a 1.09% existing consumption sales tax within the city limits of Woodland Park, Colorado collected and distributed to the RE-2 Woodland Park School District.

**NO** A "no" vote on 2A **retains** the 1.09% existing consumption sales tax within the city limits of Woodland Park, Colorado collected and distributed to the RE-2 Woodland Park School District.

### **Summary and Analysis for 2 A**

In the 2016 general election, Woodland Park voters considered an increase in local sales consumption taxes by 1.09%. The 2016 ballot language follows:

"Shall the city of Woodland Park, Colorado, taxes be increased by \$2.296 million in the first full fiscal year and by such amounts as may be generated annually thereafter by an additional sales tax at the rate of 1.09% commencing July 1, 2016, and continuing thereafter, to be used exclusively by Woodland Park School District RE2 for educational purposes, including:

- Providing financial support to the Woodland Park School District RE2;
- Providing funds to allow the Woodland Park School District to eliminate its existing debt service mill levy by refinancing existing general obligation debt;
- Providing funds to make annually appropriated payments under any lease purchase financing used to refinance any existing general obligation debt or to finance the costs of capital projects; and
- Provided that the revenues from such sales tax shall be collected by the city and disbursed pursuant to a multiple fiscal year financial obligation of the city evidenced by **intergovernmental agreement** between the City and the School District; and shall the revenue from such tax increase and any earnings from the investment thereof constitute a voter approved revenue change that may be collected, retained and spent by the city for the purposes set forth above notwithstanding the limitation contained in Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado constitution or any other law?"

The vote passed 1,363 for; 916 against. With the passage of the initiative, the Woodland Park Sales tax rate increased from 6.90 to 7.99%. The current sales tax rate in Woodland Park is 8.49%. The vote for the new tax rate also resulted in a decrease of the property tax mill levy for commercial and residential property owners in the city limits by 6.725 mills. The current property tax mill levy for the school district is 27 mills.

In 2016 and 2024, the City of Woodland Park and the RE2 Woodland Park School District, as required by the approved ballot initiative, addressed collection, distribution, reporting protocols and specific areas of sales tax expenditures via an intergovernmental agreement (IGA). These IGAs, signed by the Woodland Park Mayor and the RE2 Woodland Park Board of Education President, included a more refined definition of "financial support" as 1) post-secondary preparation courses, 2) innovative school programs, 3) technology, 4) staff salaries, and 5)

facility maintenance and improvements. At the time of this information, only three other taxing districts in the State levied a sales tax for educational purposes.

**Argument For 2A:** Concerns with retaining or relying on a consumer sales tax for public school funding revolve around issues of accountability, stability, and economic efficiency. The regressive nature of sales taxes volatility during economic downturns, and the potential to harm local businesses and low-income households are significant drawbacks.

- Sales tax revenue earmarked for school funding may be diverted to other areas over time, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability.
- Shifting political administrations and fiscal priorities can make it difficult to secure long-term commitments to keep sales tax revenue dedicated to education.
- Sales taxes disproportionately impact low-income families, as they spend a higher percentage of their income on taxable goods and services.
- Sales tax increases can raise the cost of living, particularly for struggling families, and Woodland Park's 8.49% tax rate is higher than most Colorado districts.
- Sales tax revenue fluctuates with economic cycles, making it an unstable source of school funding, which complicates long-term planning and can result in budget shortfalls during downturns.
- Higher sales taxes may discourage local spending, driving consumers to shop in neighboring areas with lower tax rates, affecting local businesses.

**Argument Against 2A:** By retaining a sales tax specifically for school funding, the community could diversify the funding streams and provide stable, flexible, and equitable resources to support the needs of public schools.

- The 1.09% sales tax, passed in 2016, was intended to provide an alternative to higher property taxes, resulting in a decrease of 6.725 Mills in property taxes within the district.
- The sales tax funds educational programs including 1) post-secondary preparation courses, 2) innovative school programs, 3) technology, 4) staff salaries, and 5) facility maintenance and improvements. Repealing this tax would remove approximately \$3M from the district's budget for these budgeted areas.
- Strong schools contribute to the local community by attracting families, benefiting businesses, and supporting the local economy. Removing the sales tax could negatively impact these outcomes.
- Sales taxes apply to all who make purchases in the district, including residents, visitors, and tourists, spreading the tax burden across a broad revenue base.
- The 1.09% sales tax provides an additional revenue stream for the RE2 Woodland Park School District, reducing reliance on property taxes.
- Consumption of goods and services continues during economic downturns, offering a relatively stable source of school funding compared to income or property taxes.
- A local sales tax allows for community involvement, giving voters the ability to approve rates and control school funding directly.
- Eliminating or reducing the sales tax could lead to budget shortfalls, resulting in cuts to programs, staff, or facility improvements within the school district.
- Retaining the sales tax supports financial stability for long-term planning, enabling continued investments in infrastructure and educational programs.

**Fiscal Impact for 2A: If Repealed** – the 1.09% existing consumption sales tax within the city limits of Woodland Park, Colorado will no longer be collected. A loss of approximately \$3M million per school year.\*

**Fiscal Impact for 2A: If Retained** – the 1.09% existing consumption sales tax within the city limits of Woodland Park, Colorado will continue to be collected.

**\*Past Cumulative Collections Chart: (2016 – 2024)** – The table below depicts the total taxes collected since the passage of the 2016 ballot questions. If repealed the loss to the school district will be approximately \$3.2M per school year. Chart provided by the City of Woodland Park

1.09% SALES TAX COLLECTION FOR RE-2 WOODLAND PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT								
(BEFORE PASS-THROUGH CHARGES)								
2016 Jul-Dec	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 Jan-Jul
\$1,746,988	\$2,129,315	\$2,266,718	\$2,340,179	\$2,593,098	\$2,798,662	\$3,012,124	\$3,074,708	\$1,746,988

### Ballot Question 7A1:

Shall Ute Pass Regional Health Service District taxes be increased \$2,500,000 annually in the first full fiscal year, and by such amount as may be raised annually thereafter, through the imposition, pursuant to sections 32-1-1003(5) and 32-19-112, C.R.S., of an additional one percent (1.0%) uniform sales tax, beginning January 1, 2025, throughout the entire geographic area of the district upon every transaction or other incident with respect to which a sales tax is levied by the state pursuant to article 26 of title 39, C.R.S. (excluding purchases of food for domestic home consumption, prescription medications, and other exempt transactions); and shall all district revenues be collected, retained and spent notwithstanding any revenue limits provided by law for the purpose of:

- a) Improving recruitment and retention of paramedics and EMTs by increasing pay and improving benefits,
- b) Hiring additional paramedics and emergency medical technicians as needed to meet growing demands,
- c) Reducing response times and keeping the Florissant ambulance station open,
- d) Improving patient care by expanding paramedic treatment protocols,
- e) Enhancing community paramedic and mobile crisis response programs,
- f) Sustaining the district resident "no surprise ambulance bill" ambulance insurance only billing program,
- g) Purchasing replacement and additional ambulances, cardiac monitors, medical devices, medical supplies, and medications,
- h) Increasing funding for capital improvement projects and improving existing ambulance stations,
- i) Providing alternative healthcare and transportation-related services in partnership and collaboration with other healthcare providers,
- j) Improving district satisfaction with services provided, enhancing patient care outcomes, and lowering district resident out-of-pocket costs when seeking healthcare services

### What Your Vote Means

**YES:** A "yes" vote **increases** the current consumer tax rate for the Ute Pass Regional Health Service District from 0.5% to 1.5%

**NO:** A "no" vote **maintains** the current consumer tax rate for the Ute Pass Regional Health Service District at 0.5%

**Summary and Analysis:** In 2018, voters in the Ute Pass Regional Health District approved a .5% consumer sales tax to benefit the area ambulance district. The tax, which augmented traditional revenue streams for the district (i.e., property tax mill levies and health insurance reimbursements), did not impose taxes on medical prescriptions or groceries. In November 2023, the district asked for an additional 1% consumer sales tax through a ballot initiative. This ballot



question was not approved. In the 2024 general election, the district is again asking residents to approve an additional 1% sales tax for district operations.

**Argument For 7A1:** A local sales tax dedicated to funding ambulance services can provide consistent revenue, enhance service quality, and reduce financial barriers for users.

- **Stable and Predictable Revenue Stream.** A local sales tax provides a steady source of funding for ambulance services. This ensures that emergency medical services (EMS) are consistently available without needing to rely on grants, donations, or fluctuating budgets. Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured losses are unrecoverable and unsustainable. According to a fact sheet produced by the district in 2023, non-district residents continued to “use ambulance services without paying for what they use”.
- **Broad Funding Base.** Sales tax spreads the cost across all residents and visitors, not just property owners. This makes it a more equitable solution as everyone who purchases goods and services in the area contributes to the service, including tourists and non-residents.
- **Improved Service Availability and Response Time.** Reliable funding can enhance the quality and availability of ambulance services, leading to faster response times, more advanced equipment, better training for EMS staff, and potentially more ambulance units, reducing pressure on existing resources.
- **Less Reliance on User Fees.** Financing ambulance services through sales tax can reduce or eliminate user fees for those who need emergency services. This can make the service more accessible to individuals who might otherwise hesitate to call an ambulance due to financial concerns.
- **Community Health Benefits.** A well-funded ambulance service can improve overall public health outcomes. With greater resources, the service may provide faster and more comprehensive care, leading to better recovery times and potentially saving more lives in emergencies. The district partners with other community emergency medical services to provide 24-hour mobile crises, behavioral health, suicide prevention, and community paramedic services. Funding is needed to sustain the mobile crisis response throughout our area.

**Argument Against 7A1:** An additional consumer tax for ambulance services can impose a heavier burden on residents, potentially harm local businesses, and face resistance from the public.

- **Impact on Residents with Varying Incomes.** Sales taxes tend to affect individuals differently based on income levels, with lower-income households often spending a larger portion of their earnings on taxable goods and services. As a result, even modest increases in sales tax may have a greater impact on their budget.
- **Unpredictable Revenue in Economic Downturns:** Sales tax revenue is tied to consumer spending, which can decrease significantly during economic downturns or recessions. This creates a vulnerability in funding ambulance services when the economy weakens and consumer spending drops.

**Fiscal Impact for 7A1:** \$2,500,000 annually in the first full fiscal year, and by such amount as may be raised annually thereafter, through the imposition, pursuant to sections 32-1-1003(5) and 32-19-112, C.R.S., of an additional one percent (1.0%) uniform sales tax, beginning January 1, 2025.