



COLORADO RESISTANCE — MANUAL —

An Indivisible Guide for Colorado, by Coloradans

How to win state and local elections & resist
Republican gerrymandering in Colorado

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a note from the team



Holly Hursley

This document applies specifically to politics and elections in the state of Colorado. However, it is our hope that progressive leaders from across the nation are able to use it as a starting point to create guides to politics and elections in their own states, just as we drew inspiration from the federal [*Indivisible Guide*](#).

For activists—especially those getting involved in state politics for the first time—know that as cheesy as this may sound, you genuinely do have real power. Elections for state offices, like state house or state senate, are often decided by just a few hundred (sometimes, even just a few dozen) votes. Grassroots volunteers working together to get engaged in local elections to “get out the vote” can and do tip the balance of these races.

This is a living document and we hope to regularly update it to reflect new and timely information, research, and feedback. Sign up to receive updates at ColoradoResistance.org. You can also follow us on: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

We want to hear your stories, questions, comments, and suggestions! Please feel free to ping us on Twitter: [@ColoradoResists](#) or

via email at hello@coloradoresistance.org.

And *please* spread the word by sharing this guide as widely as possible. Only folks who know this exists will use it.

Good luck out there. Let’s get at it.

Note to immigrants and noncitizens

The US Constitution ensures equal representation for all individuals living in the United States, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or immigration status. Noncitizens, though they may lack the right to vote, have the right to (1) have their voices heard by their representatives in state and local government and (2) work to support causes and candidates in numerous other ways.

This guide is intended to serve as a resource to all individuals who would like to more effectively participate in the democratic process. While we encourage noncitizens to participate to the extent that they are able, individuals should only take actions that they are comfortable taking.

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This document was inspired by [*Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Re-*](#)

why state politics?

This document is based on a simple premise: **one of the most effective ways to resist Donald Trump's agenda is by channeling this moment of unprecedented energy into electing as many progressives as possible to state & local office.**

At first glance, this might seem like a stretch. With a shamelessly corrupt, white supremacist-enabling, wannabe strongman currently entrenched in the White House, are we really supposed to believe that state legislature and school board races are a viable long-term solution to this crisis?

As it turns out, yes. Here's why.



Robert Thomasson

because redistricting

Trump’s unpopularity and incompetence is the opportunity of a lifetime.

Trump’s presidency is off to a *historically unpopular start*. As far as opportunities for progressive electoral backlash go, we’ve literally never seen anything like this before.

Think back to right after President Obama was elected in 2008. We seemed to be on the precipice of achieving comprehensive immigration reform, passing a carbon tax, and ensuring healthcare for every American. Yet President Obama—a much more popular President than Trump—saw huge portions of his agenda effectively blocked by the obstructionism of the Tea Party.

However, more was taking place at that time than just ragtag groups of angry obstructionists attending town halls and rallies. In fact, the most important thing taking place was that the GOP elites were making plans for what would be one of the biggest political comebacks in American history. That comeback was the 2010 Midterm Election.

It would be almost impossible to overstate the impact that the 2010 Midterm Election had on the rise of Donald Trump and where we are today. It’s common knowledge that the Republicans pulled off a massive sweep of congressional races in 2010.

But here’s the part that isn’t common knowledge: the real brilliance of what the GOP accomplished in the 2010 Election was winning control of state legislatures — the key to controlling the redistricting process — as part of a deliberate strategy known as *RED-*

MAP. By targeting state legislatures and governor’s races in 2010, Republicans were able to take control of the redistricting process, which occurs every ten years and largely shapes the makeup of Congress for the next decade or more.

But here’s the part that isn’t common knowledge: the real brilliance of what the GOP accomplished in the 2010 Election was sweeping control of key state legislatures across the country as part of a deliberate strategy known as REDMAP.

Now, consider this: As a general rule of thumb, the party in charge of the White House tends to lose seats in midterm elections. The more unpopular the White House, the heavier the losses. And the next redistricting year is right around the corner in 2020.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for the progressive movement. By channeling the anti-Trump backlash into strategic state legislature races and securing the governor’s mansion in 2018, we can protect races at every level of government from Republican gerrymandering for at least the next decade.



We must establish that Trumpism loses elections

The crisis facing our nation is much larger than Donald Trump. Consider the lesson every aspiring Republican politician just learned from the 2016 election: if you want to win, be like Trump.

Racial demagoguery, flagrant disrespect for civic norms and institutions, and an utter lack of a coherent policy platform were rewarded with an election day victory. While Donald Trump is the most prominent symptom of these trends to date, such abhorrent strategies have already been paying big dividends for Republicans in low-turnout state and local elections for years. Mid-term elections have

far lower levels of turnout than Presidential elections, so it is essential we use 2018 to end these strategies.

As long as this behavior continues to win Republicans elections, they will have zero incentive to change it.

We must establish that Trumpism is a loser—that embracing the behavior and policies of Donald Trump is utter poison at the ballot box. The more Republicans lose seats, the more they will begin to second-guess Trumpism as a political doctrine. Trump’s power will begin to crumble from the foundation up.

Who is this document by and for?

we

are progressive political staffers, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, regular citizens, and activists with a deep understanding of Colorado politics.

we

see a huge opportunity to not only resist the Trump agenda by electing progressives here at home, but ensure Republicans don’t control redistricting in Colorado in 2020

you

want to keep Trumpism out of Colorado, elect as many progressives as possible, and make Colorado a national model for the progressive movement

you

should use this guide, share it, amend it, make it your own, and get to work

Progressive states are leading the resistance

Destructive Republican policies may originate in Washington, but they'll be implemented in our communities by state and local officials. The more power local Democrats have, the more power the resistance has to fight back.

With a fully blue state government, Colorado could step up as a national leader in the Trump resistance. Our first opportunity to make that happen is with crucial state legislature and governor's races in 2018. These races are doubly important with 2020, a presidential election and redistricting year, on the horizon.

Winning statewide constitutional offices in 2018 (governor, attorney general, treasurer,

secretary of state) will allow us to use every tool at our state's disposal to resist Trump's agenda.

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For example, by electing a progressive state attorney general, Colorado could join states like Washington and Hawaii in suing over Trump's unconstitutional executive orders or actions like the so-called "Muslim ban."

Redistricting & Gerrymandering

Redistricting

is the process by which new Congressional districts (Colorado has 7 congressional seats) are drawn to reflect population increases, demographic shifts, and data from the US Census. Districts need to have an equal number of voters in them, so it's important to update the district boundaries from time to time. This process occurs every ten years and is controlled by the state legislature.

A separate redistricting process known as "reapportionment," which redraws the maps for state senate and state house districts, also occurs every ten years.

Gerrymandering

is the term used to refer to when partisan politicians draw the new district maps to unfairly favor their political party's chances of winning. This is done by carving up the state districts in precise ways to almost guarantee a victory for their party. The legislators who get elected in both 2018 and 2020 will be the ones in charge of redistricting in Colorado in 2020.

It is crucial that Democrats win control of both the state legislature and governor's mansion in 2018 in order to safeguard against Republican gerrymandering in 2020.

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What about Congress?

This guide focuses on state-level elections instead of congressional races like the effort to unseat Cory Gardner. Here's why:

1. A small group can have an outsized impact on a state legislative race.

The outcome may be decided by just a few hundred votes.

2. This is how we stop Republican gerrymandering.

The redistricting process is controlled by state legislatures and governors every 10 years. When a new wave of Republicans took over state legislatures nationwide in 2010 (a redistricting year), they were able to redraw political districts

at both the state and federal level to effectively rig them in favor of Republican candidates.

3. Progressives are taking heavy losses at the state and local level.

Democrats have lost more than 1000 seats in the past eight years, with the vast majority of those losses happening in state legislatures nationwide. The situation in Congress may be dire, but the situation on the ground in most states is even worse.

While this document is focused on state and local elections, there are many existing organizations already devoted to supporting progressives at the federal level. Consider checking out the [National Indivisible Guide](#) and [Swing Left](#) if you're interested in working on both!

The bad news: Republicans have an alarming level of power

There's no way to sugarcoat this: a Republican party willing to enable the authoritarian tendencies of Donald Trump currently controls an alarming number of seats at virtually every level of government.

Republicans **control** 68 of the nation's 99 state legislative bodies and 33 governor's mansions, leaving the Democrats at their weakest point since before WWII. Republicans now have full control of 32 state legislatures and split control of 5. They are dangerously close

to reaching the 38-legislature threshold necessary to **ratify constitutional amendments**.

Please take a moment to let the concept of a Republican party led by Donald Trump and Steve Bannon rewriting the constitution sink in. This isn't some crackpot conspiracy theory: ALEC, a powerful pro-Republican / corporate lobbying operation that's played an **instrumental role** in the Republican takeover of state legislatures, literally has a page about holding a constitutional convention **on its website**.

The good news: a progressive takeover of Colorado is possible in 2018 (but...)

If we can channel even a fraction of the current anti-Trump grassroots energy into the right races, a full Democratic takeover of Colorado is on the table in 2018.

But.

Sweeping Republicans out of power in upcoming elections is not inevitable. Despite massive election losses by Democrats over the past decade, we're already seeing **overconfident predictions** of an inevitable Democratic sweep in 2018.

As anyone with experience in electoral politics will tell you, this line of thinking is a trap. The Republican party is a well-oiled political

machine with a whole lot of money and what we'll charitably call "questionable" tactics.

In order to engineer a full takeover of the state in 2018, we need to retake the State Senate, hold the State House, and sweep open races for Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Treasurer.

A progressive sweep in 2018 will take more than an unprecedented grassroots mobilization. If we're going to win, ordinary people—many who are getting involved with politics for the very first time—need to start thinking like political strategists. This guide will teach you how, step by step.



What's at stake

Despite a notable lack of media coverage, many of the policies that most directly affect people's lives are actually made at the state and local level. With a fully progressive state government, we can go beyond merely resisting Trump's destructive agenda and begin advancing policies that actually improve people's lives.

To truly understand what's at stake in state politics, just look at what each party in Colorado has prioritized (but not always being successful at) in recent years:

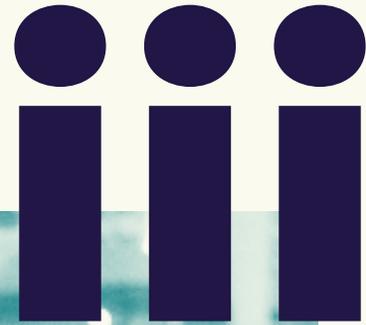
Colorado Democrats

- Requiring basic background checks for gun purchases
- Creating free all-day kindergarten for families throughout the state
- Joining the National Popular Vote Compact to end the Electoral College as we know it
- Requiring oil & gas extraction operations to be further away from schools and neighborhoods
- Making Colorado a leader in renewable energy by requiring at least 30% of energy from renewables by 2020
- Creating the most modern and accessible voting system in the country
- Easing TABOR restrictions to end the unnecessary, self-imposed funding crisis facing our schools, roads, and hospitals.
- Allowing same-sex couples to enter into a civil union, long before marriage equality
- Making it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Colorado Republicans

- Making all forms of abortion illegal, even in cases of rape or incest
- Repealing all forms of gun violence prevention
- Making free speech and nonviolent protests near an oil & gas site a felony offense
- Defunding the Colorado health care exchange
- Cutting rural hospital funding for medic-aid patients
- Reducing polling sites and requiring "photo ID," limiting access to the ballot for low-income folks, communities of color, and young people
- Supporting and defending the most restrictive and conservative tax policy in the country—Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR)
- Reducing funding for k-12 education by thousands of dollars per pupil
- Reducing funding for higher education to less than 5% from state taxpayer dollars

one page summary



the strategy

A top-level overview of the political strategy guiding this document. Our efforts will be focused on:

Engaging with and pressuring state politicians. Just like the federal indivisible guide, but targeting state representatives and state senators.

Building a grassroots war chest of small-dollar contributions for candidates in the most strategic districts in 2018. We'll explore how anyone and everyone can raise money to help progressives take on the GOP's big money machine and win.

Dispatching volunteer support to strategic races, both from within swing districts, but also from deep blue parts of the state. Think of it as a combination of *Swing Left* and *Sister District*, but for Colorado politics.

chapter one

Colorado politics 101

All the questions about state and local politics you were too embarrassed to ask. You can't win real change at the local level without understanding the basic building blocks of Colorado politics. This chapter provides a crash course in what you need to know in order to be effective in local elections and government.

chapter two

Getting organized

Is there an existing local group or network you can join? Or do you need to start your own? We suggest steps to help mobilize your fellow constituents locally and start organizing for action.

chapter three

Impacting State Legislation

A step-by-step guide to how you can become an effective citizen lobbyist at the CO Capitol.

chapter four

2018: A Progressive Majority How-To

What you can do now to help win progressive political victories in 2018. We'll teach you how to use your time effectively to defeat conservative candidates & elect progressive ones.

colorado politics 101



Ali Bibbo

1

The Colorado government is structured in a similar way to the Federal government. For instance, we also have 3 major branches: the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial. Here's a quick summary of each:

The Executive Branch

The Executive Branch is actually made up of 4 different offices, all of which are elected separately and operate independently of one another: Governor, Attorney General, Treasurer, and Secretary of State.

Governor

Term: 4 years

Term limits: 2 terms (8 years total)

Current Governor: John Hickenlooper (D)

Term limited in 2018

The Governor is like the President of the state. The Lieutenant Governor (currently: Donna Lynne) is chosen by the Governor, just as a Presidential candidate chooses their running mate.

The Governor appoints people to a cabinet, which typically consists of the directors of major state agencies such as the Department of Public Health & the Environment, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Regulatory Affairs.

These cabinet positions are voted on and confirmed by the Colorado Senate. Just like the US President, the Governor also signs or vetoes bills that pass through the legislative branch.

Attorney General

Term: 4 years

Term limits: 2 terms (8 years total)

Current Attorney General: Cynthia Coffman (R)

First term ends in 2018

The Attorney General serves as the state's legal counsel and advisor. The AG's responsibilities include enforcing criminal laws of the state and defending the legal interests of the people of the State of Colorado. The AG can also lead state lawsuits against the Federal Government (for example: Hawaii's Attorney General filed a lawsuit to block President Trump's Muslim ban).

Treasurer

Term: 4 years

Term limits: 2 terms (8 years total)

Current Treasurer: Walker Stapleton (R)

Term limited in 2018

The Treasurer serves as the state's chief financial officer, overseeing the Department of Treasury. The Dept. of Treasury receives all revenues (taxes, fees, etc.), manages state investment funds, and disburses payments.

Secretary of State

Term: 4 years

Term limits: 2 terms (8 years total)

Current Secretary of State: Wayne W. Williams (R)

First term ends in 2018

The Secretary of State manages public records and documents, oversees registration of Colorado businesses and other entities, manages the state's elections, and administers campaign finance laws.

The Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch is made up of the Colorado House of Representatives and the Colorado Senate. Together, these two chambers constitute what is often referred to as the General Assembly. The General Assembly meets for 120 days each calendar year at the Colorado State Capitol Building in Denver, from early January to early May.

The Colorado House of Representatives

Members: 65 | Term: 2 years

Term limits: 4 terms (8 years total)

Balance of power: 9-seat Democratic majority (37 - 28)

Every single Representative position is up for election every 2 years.

The Colorado Senate

Members: 35 | Term: 4 years

Term limits: 2 terms (8 years total)

Balance of power: 1-seat Republican majority (18 - 17)

About 50% of Senate positions are up for election every 2 years.

Leadership positions

There are a variety of leadership positions in each chamber. These positions are elected by the members from each respective party in the legislature, often referred to as the party's "caucus."

The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House are the leaders of their respective chambers. Their responsibilities are generally to preside over and run the business in each chamber. They also decide which committee a bill is referred to once it's introduced in their chamber.

- Senate President: Kevin Grantham (R-Cañon City)
- Speaker of the House: Crisanta Duran (D-Denver)

The President Pro Tem and the Speaker Pro Tem are responsible for filling in for the president or speaker when they are unavailable or absent.

- Senate President Pro-Tem: Jerry Sonnenberg (R-Sterling)
- House Speaker Pro-Tem: Jessie Danielson (D-Wheatridge)

The Majority Leader is the leader of the the majority party in each chamber. The Majority Leader develops the daily calendar that dictates which bills will be debated, and when.

- Senate Majority Leader: Chris Holbert (R-Douglas County)
- House Majority Leader: KC Becker (D-Boulder)

The Minority Leader is the leader of whichever party is in the minority in each chamber. The Minority Leader develops caucus policy stances and serves as the caucus' main point of contact for negotiating with the majority party.

- Senate Minority Leader: Lucia Guzman (D-Denver)
- House Minority Leader: Patrick Neville (R-Douglas County)

Other leadership positions include the Majority and Minority Caucus Whip, the Majority and Minority Caucus Chair, and the Asst. Minority and Asst. Majority Leader.

The Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch is made up of different types of courts, such as the Colorado Supreme Court, District Courts, County Courts, etc. We won't focus much on the Judicial Branch in this guide because the courts are generally not a place where outside grassroots advocacy efforts are appropriate or effective.

An independent Judiciary is the cornerstone of American Democracy, and we refuse to be baited by Donald Trump's flagrant and unprecedented attempts to politicize the Judicial branch.



State Legislature Basics

The Legislature meets for 120 days each calendar year between January and May. This is called the “Legislative Session” and it is when bills are proposed and passed into law or killed. Legislators work Monday through Friday

during the legislative session. Colorado has what is called a “citizen legislature” because the legislators are only part-time and generally have other jobs during the off-season.

Understanding the Balance of Power

Democrats hold a 9-seat majority (out of 65 members) in the Colorado House and Republicans hold a 1-seat majority (out of 35) in the Colorado Senate. This means that any bill that makes it through both chambers and to the Governor’s desk for signing inherently needs to receive bipartisan support.

So, the current political dynamics result in this general rule of thumb: any bill that passes out of one chamber by a party-line vote (or close to it) will almost always die in committee in the other chamber. In other words, Republicans in the Senate will almost always kill Democratic bills from the House. This will continue to be the case until we win back a majority in the Colorado Senate.

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Colorado

This is probably the most important part to understand if you want to be effective and, unfortunately, the part that most people feel embarrassed to ask questions about. There are plenty of nuances and details, but the basic process is this:

Each legislator is allowed to introduce up to 5 bills per legislative session, and is the “Prime Sponsor” of any bills they introduce. Each bill has both a Senate Prime Sponsor and a House Prime Sponsor, and will often also receive co-sponsors — other legislators who attach

their names in order to signal their strong support for a bill.

Once a bill is officially introduced, it is assigned a bill number and scheduled for a hearing in the committee most closely related to its subject matter (for example, bills involving spending money are heard in the Appropriations Committee). A bill must make it through committees in both chambers in order to proceed through the lawmaking process. A full list of committees and the issues they cover can be found on the [*Colorado General Assembly website*](#).

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Colorado (Continued)

All committee meetings are [open to the public](#) and take place at the Capitol (or in other rooms across the street), and the [audio is streamed online](#) on the General Assembly's website. Any member of the public can attend committee hearings and testify in front of the committee to provide their viewpoint on proposed legislation.

Once a bill is presented in committee, committee members have an opportunity for debate and to offer amendments. After that, a committee will vote to send a bill to one of several fates:

- Referred to the full Senate / House floor for a full vote
- Referred to another committee for further review, amendments, and public input
- "Postponed indefinitely," which is weirdly polite Capitol-speak for killing a bill

If a bill passes out of committee and is referred to the floor for a full vote, then that means it is heading for "second reading." At this point, the full chamber will debate the bill, make amendments, and then take a vote to pass or kill the bill. If it passes second reading, then it will come up for one more test by entering "third reading" in that same chamber, where a brief debate may occur and the chamber will take a final vote on passing the bill. Third reading votes are "recorded," which means every legislator's vote will be part of the public record.

If the bill passes on the floor of one legislative chamber, it is then sent to the other chamber to start the process all over again there. If a bill passes the second chamber, it is then sent to the Governor to be signed into law or to be vetoed. Vetoes are pretty rare, but typically happen a few times each legislative session.

The Infamous Kill Committee

Each chamber has what is referred to as a "kill committee." Here's how it works: The majority party in each chamber has (1) full control over which committee each bill gets sent to and (2) control of a majority of seats on each committee (one of the many benefits of winning elections and being in the majority).

So, the majority party will establish a "kill committee" comprised of their most loyal members who will dependably vote along party lines. If

the majority party wants to quickly stonewall a piece of legislation, this is where it gets sent to die. For instance, when a Democrat introduces a bill in the Republican-controlled Senate, the Republican leadership can (and often does) send the bill to their "kill committee," where it will invariably receive a quick death by a 3-2 vote. It sounds rigged. And, well, it kind of is. This is why majorities matter.

How Colorado Elections Work

The Basics

Colorado's elections are operated under an "all options" system wherein every registered voter receives a ballot in the mail. Voters can mail ballots back in, drop them off at various locations throughout each county, or vote in person at a Voter Service & Polling Center.

To be eligible to vote in Colorado, you must have lived here for 30 days prior to the election. Colorado doesn't have a voter registration deadline, but in order to automatically receive a ballot in the mail, you must be regis-

Colorado also has same-day registration, which means you can walk right into a polling place and register on election day.

tered to vote at your current address **at least 8 days before an election**. You can register to vote online at www.govotecolorado.com.

If you register after the 8th day before an election, you'll have to make a trip to one of the Voter Service and Polling Centers in your county to either vote in person or to pick up a ballot. Colorado also has same-day registration, which means you can walk right into a polling place and register on election day.

Statewide Elections

Statewide elections for key offices such as state senate and state house occur every 2

years in "even years" and take place in early November. These elections share the same ballot as either a presidential election (e.g. 2016) or midterm election (e.g. 2018). Midterm elections are held at the halfway mark in a presidential term.

Occasionally, statewide elections take place in "odd years" like 2017, but this only occurs in the event of statewide ballot measures such as proposed tax increases.

County & City Elections

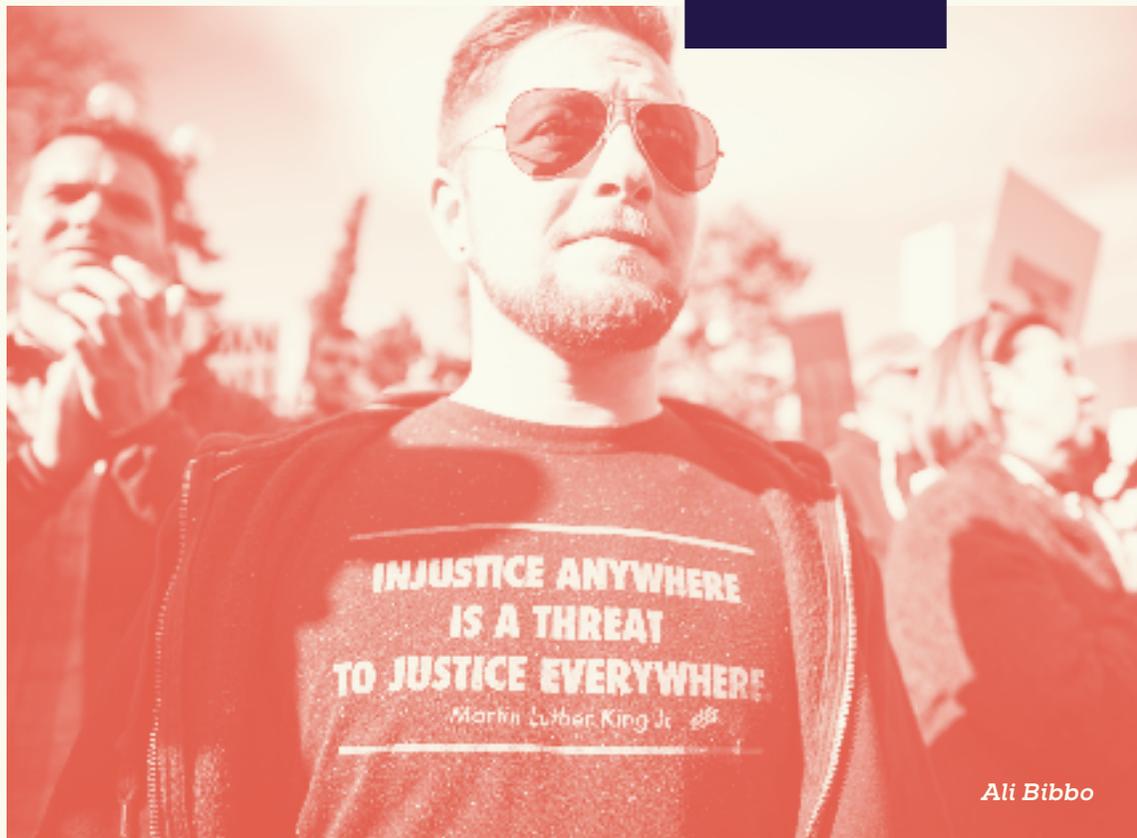
Cities and Counties hold elections for key offices such as city council, county commissioner, and school board on a schedule that is independent of the state elections. Some cities and counties will hold their elections in November of odd years, while others hold them in April or May of odd years.

Check with your local city or county clerk's office to find out when your local elections take place. A word of warning: many clerk's office websites use dated technology and are updated infrequently. The quickest way to find the information you're looking for is often to give your friendly neighborhood clerk a call!

If you're registered to vote for state elections, then you'll be all set for the local elections as well. Just be sure you're registered at your current address—if you've moved recently, you can easily update your registration online at www.govotecolorado.com.

getting organized

2



Understanding Your Mission

As you get organized and establish or join a group, it's important to keep a strong focus on your ultimate mission. Since this guide is primarily focused on winning elections, we suggest that each group sort itself into one of two groups:

Group 1: Target Districts

Congratulations (& condolences)! If you live in one of the districts listed in **Chapter 4**, you're a resident of one of the handful of "swing districts" that will determine control of the Colorado State Legislature.

People who live in these districts can have an outsized impact on state elections compared to people who live in safely red or blue areas. As residents of a target district, you and your group will be on the front line of the fight to retake the State Senate and defend the progressive majority in the State House.

Your mission: Take advantage of the fact that you live in a highly competitive swing district by devoting your energy to engaging other voters in your district.

Group 2: Sister Districts

Most Coloradans live in districts that are generally considered "safe" for one party. However, just because you don't live in a swing district doesn't mean you can't help out like-minded people who do!

If you live in a solidly red or solidly blue area, we recommend reaching out to existing activist groups in target districts to offer your support. You may not be able to vote in a target district, but that doesn't mean you can't help knock doors, make calls, raise money, and take on a wide variety of support roles for strong progressive candidates—wherever they might be running.

You can also organize to support progressive candidates for key statewide offices such as Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Treasurer regardless of where you live.

Your mission: "adopt" a target district(s) & channel your energy into the most strategic races possible.



How do I find my district?

State House and Senate Districts are drawn differently than your Congressional district, which can get quite confusing if you don't know where to look! Luckily, you can easily find both by using the Colorado General Assembly's [*"Find My Legislator" tool*](#).

Tip: Save yourself the hassle of repeat searches! Write down key information about your State Legislators (district numbers, names, contact info, etc.) and pin it somewhere visible, like on your fridge or by your desk.

Should I Form a Group?

If a nearby activist group or network is already interested in engaging in state and local elections along these lines, there's no need for you to reinvent the wheel.

Depending on your State Legislators' districts, it may make sense to have more than one group. The [Statistic Atlas Map of Colorado](#) is a great way to find the boundaries of nearby State House and Senate districts, as well as how they overlap. Simply click on the "State House Dis-

tricts" or "State Senate Districts" tabs, or select your districts from the lists below the map.

There's likely already an Indivisible group in your area, and we encourage you to join forces with them and get them to focus on state legislative races for 2018. You can search for groups near you through the national [Indivisible Guide website](#). You can also check this local [directory of Colorado-based Indivisible groups](#).

Creating & Running an Effective Group

If you look around and can't find a group working specifically on state and local elections in your area, just start doing it! It's not rocket science. You really just need two things:

- Ten or so people (but even fewer is a fine start!) who are geographically nearby — ideally in the same State House and / or State Senate district
- A commitment from those people to de-

vote a couple hours per month to keeping the racism, authoritarianism, and corruption pushed by Trump out of Colorado's government by winning elections in 2018

Tip: If you start a new group, be sure to register it on the [Indivisible Guide website](#) (look for the "Register a group" button) so others can find and join you!

Don't forget to register your group!

Whether you're part of an existing group or starting a new one, be sure to (1) go to www.indivisibleguide.com/act-locally/ to register your group. The good people at Indivisible have created a public directory of groups to help you make connections on your home turf.

(2) [Click here to sign up for our email updates](#). We're constantly working to help build local election action plans and tackle some of the more labor-intensive research tasks that go into engaging in elections. We'll take on as much of the boring stuff as possible so you can focus on supporting progressive candidates and getting out the vote!

How to Launch a Group

If you do want to form a group, here are our recommendations on how to go about it:

1. Decide you're going to start a local group dedicated to engaging in state and local elections. This might be a subgroup of an existing activist group or it might be a new effort — it really depends on your circumstances. Start where people are: if you're already part of a group with a lot of people who want to do this kind of thing, then start there; If not, you'll need to find them somewhere else.

The most important thing is that your group stays pretty laser-focused on state and local elections from day one. With so much going on, it's dangerously easy to get distracted by the scandal of the day, or let one particularly loud activist drag your group off task. Being very clear about your group's mission up front is a good way to get early buy-in from your members and keep yourselves focused.

2. Identify a few additional co-founders who are interested in participating and recruiting others. Ideally, these are people who have different social networks from you so that you can maximize your reach. Make an effort to ensure that leadership of the group reflects the diversity of opposition to Trump.

3. Email your contacts and post a message on your Facebook page, on any local Facebook groups that you're a member of, and/or other social media channels you use regularly (Tip: the #Resist hashtag on [Nextdoor.com](https://www.nextdoor.com) and [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) is a great way to find activists within your neighborhood).

Say that you're starting a group to resist the

Trump agenda by electing as many progressives as possible to state and local office. Don't hesitate to use this guide as a resource for arguments and data points to support your pitch — that's what the "**Why State Politics?**" section is for!

4. Invite everyone who has expressed interest to an in-person kickoff meeting. Use this meeting to agree on a name, delegate roles for leadership, establish a way to communicate with each other, and establish your group's mission (either "Target District" or "Sister District" — see "Understanding Your Mission" for details).

Remember the "rule of halves:" about 50% of the people who have said they are definitely coming will actually show up to your meeting, so aim high! Get firm commitments from people to come — they'll want to because saving democracy / putting the brakes on our current crazy train to fascist town is actually pretty fun.

Tips for running an effective kickoff meeting:

a. Manage the meeting: Keep people focused on the ultimate core strategy: electing as many progressive as possible to state and local office in Colorado. Other attendees may have other ideas—or may be coming to share their concerns about Trump—and it's important to affirm their concerns and feelings. But it's also important to redirect that energy and make sure that the conversation stays focused on developing a group and plan of action dedicated to this strategy.

b. Decide on a name: Good names include the geographic area of your group, so that it's clear that you're rooted in the community (Indivisible Front Range Resistance and Indivisible Boulder are a cou-

Holly Hursley

— How to Launch a Group (continued) —

ple Colorado-based examples).

Tips for running an effective kickoff meeting (continued):

c. Volunteer for roles: Figure out how to divide roles and responsibilities among your group. This can look very different depending on who's in the room, but at a minimum, you probably want 1-2 people in charge of overall group coordination, a designated media/social media contact, and maybe 1-2 people in charge of tracking state legislators' office schedules and events.

In addition to these administrative roles also recommend designating election-specific leadership roles:

i. Research Lead: Responsible for coordinating your group's research efforts to answer questions such as which elections are coming up, which candidates are running, and what their positions are.

ii. Outreach Lead: Responsible for keeping track of / serving as your primary point of contact with allied groups—especially those located within your sister district(s). Other potential allies include progressive candidates, county democrats, and other Indivisible groups.

iii. Fundraising Lead: Responsible for heading up your group's grassroots efforts to raise money for progressive candidates. Someone with a background in non-profit development, political fundraising, or a similar field is ideal for this role. If you don't have anyone with a fundraising

background, don't panic! We'll get into simple fundraising strategies and tools anyone can use later on in the guide.

d. Adopt means of communication: You need a way of reaching everyone in your group in order to coordinate actions. This can be a Facebook group, a Google group, a Slack team — whatever people are most comfortable with. It may be wise to consider secure or encrypted platforms such as Signal and WhatsApp.

e. Establish your mission: Is your group based in a safe district or a target district? Who are your State Senators and Representatives? If you're in a safe area and want to support winning an election in a target district, which target district is closest to you, and who do you know there?

5. Expand! Enlist your members to recruit across their networks. Ask every member to send out the same outreach emails/posts that you did.

- Recruit people for your email list — 100 or 200 isn't unreasonable.
- We strongly recommend making a conscious effort to diversify your group and particularly to center around and defer to communities of people who are most directly affected by harmful conservative policies. This could include both reaching out through your own networks and forming relationships with community groups that are already working on protecting the rights of marginalized folks.

Tips for maintaining an effective group

Pick a consistent meeting time and place

People's schedules are more packed than ever, and new activism opportunities spring up every day. The more advanced notice you can provide, the easier it will be for your members to plan ahead and regularly attend meetings.

If possible, we recommend picking a consistent meeting time and place for your members to pencil into their calendars. How often you meet is up to you and your group. If you're not sure, try starting at once every two weeks and adjusting from there (you'll likely find you need to meet more and more frequently the closer you get to elections).

Potential meeting places will depend on the size of your group, and can include member's homes, local coffee shops or restaurants, and public libraries (many allow you to reserve

meeting rooms online months in advance). Many county Democratic Parties are willing to open their offices to provide a meeting space for activists as well — in many cases, all you have to do is ask nicely!

Take advantage of social media

Social media is a great way to get your message out and recruit new members (for free!). It's important to understand the different social networks and their roles, but at a minimum, we'd recommend using a mix between a [*public Facebook page*](#) (for communicating with a larger and more public audience) and/or a [*private Facebook group*](#) (for more internal organizing and strategizing within your group, etc.) You should also set up a Twitter account in order to interact with local media (journalists love Twitter. A lot.)

A note about egos

One of the biggest things to watch out for in group dynamics like this is to ensure egos and personalities don't get in the way of achieving your goals. Being volunteer-run and decen-

tralized can sometimes lead to conflicts within group settings like this. One tip: **the best leaders know when to follow.**

3



impacting state legislation

Impacting State Legislation

One of the biggest reasons progressives have fallen so far behind at the state level is due to a

If we want to start winning back seats, then, the first step is to get active in state politics by knowing what state legislators are up to ...

lack of engagement. If we want to start winning back seats, then, the first step is to get active in state politics by knowing what state legislators are up to, pressuring them to do the right thing, and holding them accountable at the ballot box when they don't.

At first glance, these pressure tactics might seem unrelated to winning elections. But by being strategic and documenting every step, the right video clip from a rowdy town hall or strong public testimony at a committee hearing can end up playing a big role in deciding the outcome of a competitive race.

This chapter will show you how to take the strategy and tactics of the national Indivisible Guide and apply them to your state elected officials. For the sake of efficiency, the examples in this chapter focus on state legislators, but you can apply these same tactics to virtually any elected official—from city councilors and school board members to the Attorney General or Governor.

What's the point of pressuring a divided state government?

It's important to be realistic and accept that we may not see a lot of progressive policy victories in the Colorado Legislature until we win back the majority in the Colorado Senate. However, using the legislative session and targeting incumbent Republicans can be an incredible organizing strategy to galvanize voters. It also achieves the ever-important goal of pressuring on elected officials to better represent their constituents.

Sometimes it may be very obvious what the outcome of a bill is going to be. However, that is not a reason to give up and let it pass or fail quietly. For one, many major progressive bills will take several legislative sessions before they finally pass. It's also important not to let a Republican bill pass through the Senate without a fight, and equally important to show Democrats in the House that the public supports a bold, progressive policy agenda.

Gathering Intel

Before anything else, take the following steps to arm yourself with the information you'll need for all future advocacy activities:

1. Find your target State Senator, State Representative, their official websites, and their office contact info at leg.colorado.gov/find-my-legislator. Note: State legislative districts are smaller than congressional districts and based on address, not ZIP code. A member of your group from one end of town might be part of a completely different State House or Senate district than you. [The Statistical Atlas map of Colorado](#) is a great resource for understanding how various districts overlap.
2. Sign up for the legislators' mailing lists and follow their social media accounts to receive regular

email updates, invites to local events, and communications to understand their public message. Not every local legislator will have a strong online presence (you'll find some are... well, a little amateur-hour), but track down as much as you can.

3. Find out where your legislators stand on the issues of the day. Review their voting history at leg.colorado.gov/legislators & votesmart.org. Research their campaign contributors at followthemoney.org & tracer.sos.colorado.gov.

4. Set up a [Google News Alert](#)—for example for “State Senator Bob Smith”—to receive an email whenever your legislators are in the news. You can also use [Google News](#) to see what local reporters have written about the legislator.

On not being a jerk

Keep in mind that unlike Members of Congress, Colorado state legislators are part-time, and go back to being regular members of the community (day jobs and all) when the General Assembly is out of session. They're only given funding to hire one part-time staffer along with a handful of unpaid interns, and serve in the legislature because they earnestly believe in the value of state government as a means to help people.

While there are some exceptions, the vast majority of state legislators and their staffers are fundamentally well-intentioned people (even if you have strong disagreements with their political ideologies). A nerdy conservative po-

litical science major who decided to take an internship with his state senator's office is not an appropriate target for the brunt of your anger and anxieties over the Trump presidency.

Always remember that the way you present your case reflects on the entire progressive movement, and that any rude or profane behavior can and will be used by right wing-media outlets to negatively frame the vital work of thousands of grassroots activists. Constantly press yourself to be as articulate, fact-based, and respectful as possible, especially when it feels most difficult to do so. When they go low, we go high.

Advocacy tactics that work

Much like the national Indivisible Guide, this chapter describes the nuts and bolts of implementing advocacy tactics to put pressure on state legislators. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** since your ultimate goal is winning seats for progressives, it's doubly important that you **document everything and share it as widely as possible** (on social media, by sharing with the press, etc).

A video of a strong progressive candidate for reelection delivering a powerful speech or a great

answer to a town hall question can be invaluable for their campaign. On the flip side, a video of a Republican candidate for reelection snapping at a town hall audience or saying something that is out of the mainstream can cause serious political damage.

The key point is this: **if you don't document something on photo and video, it's like it never happened.**

Testifying For or Against Bills in Committee

One of the remarkable things about the Colorado Legislature is that it's actually incredibly accessible for regular people to play a role. In fact, anyone can go to testify in support of or in opposition to a bill when it is in committee. You just need to show up when the bill is scheduled to be heard, sign your name on a list, and wait for your name to be called.

Bill committee hearings are scheduled and posted for both the House and the Senate on the General Assembly's website at <http://leg.colorado.gov/content/committees>. It is best to show up about 30 minutes before your bill is scheduled to be heard. Keep in mind that if there are several bills being heard in a particular committee that day, you may have to wait for a few bills to be voted on before your bill comes up.

Although there can be exceptions, each person is generally given three minutes to speak. If you have a compelling personal story to tell, this is the ideal time and place to tell it. You'll be able

to tell your story directly to the legislators on the committee and the press will often quote from public's testimony for a news story on the bill. A bill will often only have one or two folks who show up to testify, so organizing a big turnout can send a huge message.

Here are a few tips when testifying:

- Begin your presentation by stating, "Thank you Mr. (or Madam) Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is _____ and I am representing _____ (typically you'll just say that you're representing yourself, but if you are indeed representing an organization then you can state that), and I am here to support/oppose this bill because . . ."
- Although it's best to bring some notes with bullet points, it's also okay if you just read your testimony word for word.

Testifying For or Against Bills in Committee

Here are a few tips when testifying (continued):

- Be brief and try to avoid repeating what other witnesses have already stated. Focus on points that have not yet been mentioned, if possible, and try to make your testimony unique to who you are and your experiences with the particular issue.
- At the end of your testimony, thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions.
- Remember, the Chair will likely only give you 3 minutes for your testimony. Once your 3 minutes are up, the committee can (but usually don't) ask you questions. If you don't know an answer to a question, it's always 100% fine to just say so.

Town Halls / Campaign Events

Most legislators regularly hold local “town halls” throughout their district, especially during legislative session. Additionally, if they're up for re-election, they will often hold campaign events as election time rolls around. However, some legislators are more publicly available than others.

Preparation:

1. Find out when your legislator's next public town hall or campaign event is. Sometimes these are announced well in advance, and sometimes, although they are technically “public,” only select constituents are notified about them shortly before the event. Campaign events are typically on their Facebook page or campaign website.

If you can't find announcements online, call your legislator directly to find out. When you call, be friendly and say to the staffer, “Hi, I'm a constituent, and I'd like to know when his/her next town hall forum will be.” If they don't know, ask to be added to the email list so that you get notified when they do.

2. Send out a notice of the town hall or event to your group, and get commitments from members to attend. Distribute to all of them whatever information you have on your legislator's voting record, as well as the prepared questions.

3. Prepare several questions ahead of time for your group to ask. Your questions should be fact-based, ideally including information on the *legislator's record*, votes they've taken, or statements they've made. Thematically, questions should focus on a limited number of issues to maximize impact. Prepare 5-10 of these questions and hand them out to your group ahead of the meeting.

Example question: “My child's school just cancelled their art and music program due to budget cuts from the state. I don't think it's right that we're being forced to cut funding to public education even at a time when our economy is doing really well. Why do you continue to support policies like the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) when you know it harms our community

Town Halls / Campaign Events (continued)

and puts Colorado at a disadvantage compared to other states? Will you pledge to vote in support of bills that mitigate the negative impacts of TABOR and restore funding to public schools?”

or Example question: “Oil and gas companies are starting to drill in my neighborhood and they’re proposing a new rig right outside of my son’s school. I can’t believe that state law would allow them to operate so close to a school where kids are playing. Why did you vote against a bill requiring oil and gas operations to be further away from school property?”

*Be polite but persistent,
and demand real answers.
Politicians are very good at
deflecting or dodging questions
they don’t want to answer.*

At the town hall / event:

1. Get there early, meet up, and get organized. Meet outside or in the parking lot for a quick huddle before the event. Distribute the handout of questions, and encourage members to ask the questions on the sheet or something similar.

2. Get seated and spread out. Head into the venue a bit early to grab seats at the front half of the room, but do not all sit together. Sit by yourself or in groups of two, and spread out throughout the room. If all the tough questions are coming from the same cluster of seats, your legislator will stop taking questions from that part of the room in a hurry.

3. Make your voices heard by asking good questions. When the legislator opens the floor for questions, everyone in the group should put their hands up and keep them there. Look friendly or neutral so that staffers will call on you. When you’re asking a question, remember the following guidelines:

- **Stick with the prepared list of questions.** Only ask one at a time — multi-part questions allow politicians to weasel out of answering the parts they don’t wish to address.
- **Be polite but persistent, and demand real answers.** Politicians are very good at deflecting or dodging questions they don’t want to answer. If the legislator dodges, ask a follow-up question. If they aren’t giving you real answers, then call them out for it in a respectful but firm manner. Other group members around the room should amplify by either booing the legislator or applauding you accordingly.
- **Don’t give up the mic until you’re satisfied with the answer.** If you’ve asked a hostile question, a staffer will often try to limit your ability to follow up by taking the microphone back immediately after you finish speaking. They can’t do that if you keep a firm hold on the mic. No staffer in their right mind wants to look like they’re physically intimidating a constituent, so they will back off. If they object, then say politely but loudly: “I’m not finished. [Legislator name] works for me, and is dodging my question. Why are you trying to stop me from following up?”
- **Keep the pressure on.** After one member of the group finishes, everyone should raise

Town Halls / Campaign Events (continued)

their hands again. The next member of the group to be called on should move down the list of questions and ask the next one.

4. Support the group and reinforce the message. After one member of your group asks a question, everyone should applaud to show that the feeling is shared throughout the audience. Whenever someone from your group gets the mic, they should note that they're building on the previous questions—amplifying the fact that you're part of a broad group.

5. Record everything! Assign someone in the group to use their smart phone or video camera to record other advocates asking questions and the legislators response. While written transcripts are nice, unfavorable exchanges caught on video can be devastating for legislators. These clips can be shared through social media and picked up by local and national media.

After the town hall / event:

1. Reach out to media, during and after the town hall. If there's media at the town hall, the people who asked questions should approach them afterward and offer to speak about their concerns. When the event is over, you should engage local reporters on Twitter or by email and offer to provide an in-person account of what happened, as well as the video footage you collected. Example Twitter outreach:

“@reporter I was at Rep. Smith's town hall in Superior today. Large group asked about fracking occurring near our schools. I have video & happy to chat.”

2. Share everything. Post pictures, video, your own thoughts about the event, etc., to social media afterward. Tag the legislator and encourage others to share widely.

Capitol Visits

Colorado legislators don't have “district offices” like Members of Congress do. Instead, they have one office in the Colorado Capitol (or across the street in the State Services Building) and are typically only there during the legislative session from January to May. The Capitol Building is at 200 East Colfax in Denver and is open to the public during normal business hours.

It may feel intimidating the first time you show up, but it's actually very accessible to the public.

There are often tourists and school field trips going on, so you won't be the only non-lobbyist or legislator there. Most people who are at the Capitol for work typically wear business attire, but it's not necessary for members of the public to dress up. However, you may want to just wear something business casual (or at least not a ratty t-shirt).

You're welcome to stop by and see if you can catch the legislator in their office, but you'll most likely just find their legislative aide while

Capitol Visits (continued)

the legislator is out at meetings or in a committee hearing. If they're on the floor or in committee, you can ask them to pop out to chat for a few minutes. Alternatively, you can call your legislator's office and/or send them an email asking to set up a brief meeting.

Here are a few tips for in-person meetings/visits:

1. If stopping by the member's office, ask to meet directly with the legislator, but don't be surprised if that isn't possible without an appointment. State legislators have busy schedules!

2. If you're at the Capitol while the members are on the Senate or House floor (generally in the morning starting at 9am), then there's a standard and accepted process for pulling them off the floor to chat for a few minutes. Do this by finding one of the Sergeants in the lobby to the chamber (in the House they wear green coats, in the Senate they wear red coats) and hand them a business card, notecard, slip of paper, etc. with your name on it.

If you're a constituent, make sure to write that on the card as well. They'll then hand it direct-

ly to the legislator on the floor and the legislator will generally step out as soon as they have a free moment to do so. The whole thing may sound odd, but lobbyists do this hundreds of times a day. To your legislator, this process is quite normal.

3. Have a specific "ask" or comment prepared. It's best to focus your brief conversation on a particular issue or topic that you want to discuss. You may only have a few minutes, so just keep it direct and to the point.

4. Share a personal story of you or someone in your group who is personally impacted by the specific issue (school funding, fracking near a school, access to birth control, etc.).

5. Advertise what you're doing. Communicate on social media, and tell local reporters what is happening. Take and send pictures and videos with your group: "At State Sen. Smith's office with ten other constituents to talk to him about fracking near schools. Tried to schedule a meeting, but didn't receive a response, so we showed up to try to find him."



Ali Bibbo

Coordinated Calls

Mass office calling is a light lift, but it can actually have a big impact. Tea Partiers regularly flooded legislators' offices with calls at opportune moments, and legislators noticed. State legislators are used to relatively low levels of public engagement, so a sudden floods of calls from concerned constituents really can sway their votes.

1. Find the phone numbers for your legislators. You can find a full list of state legislators and their office phone numbers at <http://leg.colorado.gov/legislators>.

2. Prepare a single “ask” or subject matter for the call. Generally speaking, your calls will fall into one of two categories:

- Asking your legislator to vote a certain way on a specific piece of legislation

- Asking your legislator a pointed question about a policy position or vote they've recently taken

3. Find out who you're talking to. In general, the staffer who answers the phone will be an intern or legislative aide, but you can always ask to speak directly with your legislator if they're available. State legislators have very limited budgets and staffs, so you might end up getting the answering machine. If that's the case, leave a voicemail and call back again at a later time.

4. Report back to social media and your group. Report the results of your call back to your social networks and your group.

Coordinated Emails

Sending emails to your legislator can be useful (especially if it's a large volume of emails from many different constituents), but be sure to personalize the content and not just click send on

a form letter that's been prewritten. Again, sharing personal stories is always the most effective thing to do. Legislator emails can be found at <http://leg.colorado.gov/legislators>.



winning elections in 2018

NOTE: As this guide is a living document, we'll work to continuously update these sections with links to more detailed research on priority candidates and races. Sign up for updates at [ColoradoResistance.org](https://coloradoreistance.org) for all the latest.

Once there are clear candidates in every district to work for, you can always reach out directly to their campaigns and ask to get

plugged in as a volunteer (we'll be compiling lists of strong progressives on [ColoradoResistance.org](https://coloradoreistance.org) as they declare their candidacies, so keep an eye out and be sure to sign up for email updates).

However, if we truly want the best possible chance of a full progressive takeover in 2018, we need to get started right now.

Picking a Target

With municipal elections in 2017 and mid-terms in 2018, every year is an election year. This can feel overwhelming at first—with so much going on, how do you decide where to focus your efforts?

We've compiled a quick summary of the different races you can engage in to help you narrow it down. You'll also find detailed breakdowns of the most important swing races in the sections below.

The trick here is to use your time and energy to have a realistic and measurable impact on winning elections in 2018. Don't try to do everything, but instead do one or two things really effectively. Picking races you're truly passionate about will help you stay focused and engaged all the way through election day.

State Senate:

Democrats are extremely close to winning back control of the state senate. We need to flip at least one of two competitive Republican seats and defend 5 vulnerable Democrats. Retaking a legislative body is always more difficult than defending, so strong grassroots engagement in these races is crucial. If you have limited time and want the most bang for your buck, State Senate races are a great place to start.

A note about senate districts: Each senate district has about 145,000 voters in it, which means that each district may span several cities and even several counties. When choosing a target for your group to focus on, remember that you don't need to focus on the entire district in order to make a big difference. For instance, if you live near the town of Golden, it might make the most sense for you to focus your energy there

rather than stretching yourself too thin and attempting to have a presence/impact on the entirety of Senate District 16. You can always divide and conquer with like-minded activists from other parts of your district!

State House:

Democrats currently hold a comparatively comfortable 9-seat majority in the State House. However, if the painful outcome of the 2016 election taught us anything, it's that there are absolutely no guarantees in politics. Every single State House seat is up for reelection in 2018, so every Coloradan can engage in these races. The smaller size of State House Districts means that small groups of well-organized activists can make an especially big impact.

Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Treasurer:

These incredibly important offices are up for reelection every four years, and always lands in midterm election years like 2018. There's no nice way to say this: In the past, progressives have been absolutely terrible at turning out for these races, so Democrats often get clobbered when they run.

Seriously folks, the utter dominance of Republicans in these races cannot be overstated:

- **Attorney General:** Democrats have only won the race for Attorney General twice since 1951.
- **Secretary of State:** With the exception of a brief window between 2009 and 2011, Republicans have held the Secretary of State's office uninterrupted since 1963.

Picking a Target (continued)

Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Treasurer (continued):

- **Treasurer:** We had a good thing going in the 80s, but it's been pretty rough as of late. With the exception of a brief window between 2007 and 2010, Republicans have held the State Treasurer's office uninterrupted since 1995.

There is absolutely **no reason** for Democrats to be getting whooped this hard in a state that voted for Democratic presidential candidates three elections in a row and is getting bluer by the year. A powerful surge of public awareness,

grassroots energy, and activism will be key in reversing this trend and winning these races.

Governor:

With Governor Hickenlooper term-limited out of office, there will be an open race for Governor in 2018. Winning the Governor's mansion is a crucial part of protecting our state from Republican Gerrymandering, to say nothing of advancing a progressive policy agenda (controlling the state legislature won't mean nearly as much with a Republican governor threatening to veto everything it passes).

A note on city and county elections in 2017

While there's certainly plenty to do in preparation for 2018, some people might find it difficult to stay focused on races before candidates have even announced. If you're finding yourself in that camp, don't panic! Important races for local offices like city council and school board are coming right up in 2017, and can even be used to build excitement and momentum for 2018.

By engaging in local and county races, you can build infrastructure and gain experience that will be invaluable when 2018 candidates begin to pop up (this strategy is especially worth

considering for cities and counties that overlap with the "target districts" listed below). Local races are also a great opportunity to get comfortable with doing electoral work if it's your first time.

Your local city and county clerk's offices keep track of candidates and run local elections. Note: Many clerk's office websites use dated technology and are updated infrequently. The quickest way to find the information you're looking for is often to give your friendly neighborhood clerk a call!

– Target Colorado State Senate Races –

Top Targets to Flip from Republican to Democrat:

Senate District 16: Tim Neville

- Republican incumbent
- Bio: Insurance salesman, formerly worked in food distribution industry
- Golden, Evergreen, Columbine, Superior, Eldorado Springs, unincorporated Jefferson County
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 35,484 | R: 37,207 | U: 45,365
- Voting Record / Issue Positions
 - Opposes virtually all forms of gun violence prevention legislation
 - Opposes programs that incentivize or promote renewable energy
 - Supports criminalizing abortion as a class 1 felony, the same category as first-degree murder and actual treason (yes, *really*)
 - Supports replacing public education funding with vouchers for private schools

Senate District 24: Beth Martinez Humenik

- Republican incumbent
- Bio: Former Thornton City Councilwoman
- Westminster, Thornton, Northglenn
- District voter registration numbers: D: 33,516 | R: 29,195 | U: 39,034
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- Voting Record / Issue Positions:
 - Supports replacing public education funding with vouchers for private schools
 - Voted against increasing air quality monitoring of oil & gas wells near schools
 - Voted to stop implementation of the Clean Power Plan
 - Voted for allowing concealed guns in public places without a permit

Top Targets to Keep Democrat:

Senate District 3: Leroy Garcia

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Marine, former Pueblo city councilman, and a paramedic
- Pueblo
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 43,128 | R: 23,908 | U: 32,503
 - Note: Elections in Pueblo are notoriously unpredictable and can be much closer than the voter registration numbers would have you believe.

Senate District 5: Kerry Donovan

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Rancher and former Vail Town Councilmember
- Vail, Aspen, Eagle, Gunnison, Crested Butte, Buena Vista
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 29,097 | R: 30,588 | U: 40,593

– Target Colorado State Senate Races –

Top Targets to Keep Democrat:

Senate District 11: Mike Merrifield

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Former music teacher and Manitou Springs City Councilmember
- Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 30,479 | R: 22,296 | U: 37,344

Senate District 20: TBD

- Currently held by Democrat Cheri Jahn, who is term-limited
- Lakewood, Wheatridge, Arvada
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 38,819 | R: 38,035 | U: 46,954

Senate District 22: TBD

- Currently held by Democrat Andy Kerr, who is term-limited
- Lakewood and other parts of Jefferson County
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 35,432 | R: 32,000 | U: 41,118

– Target Colorado State House Races –

Top Targets to Flip from Republican to Democrat:

House District 25: Tim Leonard

- Republican incumbent
- Bio: Real estate developer
- Evergreen, Morrison
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 17,161 | R: 22,409 | U: 23,929

— Target Colorado State House Races —

Top Targets to Keep Democrat:

House District 3: Jeff Bridges

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Former spokesperson for members of Congress and nonprofit advocate
- Greenwood Village, Cherry Hills, Englewood
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 18,145 | R: 16,380 | U: 21,329

House District 23: Chris Kennedy

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Engineer and former congressional staffer to Ed Perlmutter
- Lakewood
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 20,419 | R: 15,109 | U: 23,074

House District 17: Tony Exum

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Retired Chief of the Colorado Springs Fire Department
- Colorado Springs
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 12,840 | R: 10,094 | U: 16,942

House District 30: Dafna Michaelson-Jenet

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Nonprofit professional and author
- Aurora
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 16,128 | R: 10,675 | U: 16,895

House District 28: TBD

- Currently held by Brittany Pettersen, who is not running for reelection
- Lakewood
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 18,868 | R: 14,661 | U: 20,792

House District 50: TBD

- Currently held by Democrat Dave Young, who is term-limited
- Greeley
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 12,865 | R: 10,951 | U: 17,554

House District 33: Matt Gray

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Former Deputy District Attorney for Broomfield
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 19,886 | R: 17,743 | U: 25,244

House District 59: Barbara McLachlan

- Democrat incumbent
- Bio: Retired public school teacher
- Durango, Pagosa Springs, Ridgway
- [Click for full district profile](#)
- District voter registration numbers: D: 19,322 | R: 21,339 | U: 22,696R: 17,743 | U: 25,244

— Target Colorado Statewide Races —

Governor [Click for full district profile](#)

Colorado's current Governor, John Hickenlooper, is term-limited and therefore not running for reelection. This means that the Governor's seat is an "open" election where neither of the candidates from the major parties will be an incumbent. There are a handful of announced and soon-to-be-announced candidates from both parties for the Governor's race in 2018. This section will be updated once we have a clearer picture of the field.

[Click for full target race profile](#)

Attorney General

Colorado's current Attorney General is Cynthia Coffman. And, yes, one of Colorado's congressmen, Mike Coffman, is her husband. Mrs. Coffman is cut from the Trump cloth, and you may know her from previous actions such as suing the Obama Administration over the Clean Pow-

er Plan and suing Boulder County over fracking regulations. Cynthia Coffman will likely be running for reelection for Attorney General in 2018.

[Click for full target race profile](#)

Secretary of State

Colorado's current Secretary of State is Wayne Williams, a former El Paso County GOP Chair and County Clerk. Secretary Williams, who will likely seek reelection in 2018.

[Click for full target district profile](#)

Treasurer

Colorado's current Treasurer is Walker Stapleton, who is likely running for Governor in 2018. So, the race for Treasurer will be an "open" race.

[Click for full target district profile](#)

Maximizing your impact

Statewide races, while crucial, are also considerably better-resourced than state legislature and local races. When engaging in these races, then, it's important to consider ways to make your efforts overlap with target state legislature races in order to maximize your impact.

Consider that state house and senate races can be decided by a few hundred votes (as opposed to tens or hundreds of thousands for a statewide race). For example, if you're particularly passionate about the governor's race and want

to knock on some doors to get out the vote, consider going door-knocking in one of the target districts listed above.

The beauty of prioritizing swing districts is that turning out more progressive voters in those districts will have a layering impact, ensuring high turnout in key district while simultaneously turning out votes for governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer (and maybe even a Congressional race depending on where you are!)

— Helping progressives win in 2018 —

Raising money for candidates

It's incredibly important to raise grassroots money to help defeat bad candidates and support good ones. This can start right away, even before candidates have announced, as there will always be good progressives who need financial support to take on the GOP's big-money machine.

District Funds

[20 target races](#) will determine the balance of power in 2018. A full progressive takeover of Colorado is possible, but only if we win them all.

We've made it easy to channel money to support the most strategic races possible by setting up 20 "District Funds" — one for each 2018 target race. District Funds are pots of money, raised in advance, to support the eventual Democratic nominee in each 2018 target race.

***: In the same way that Bernie
: Sanders managed to do,
: raising little bits of money
: from thousands of people is
: an incredibly powerful (and
: cost-effective) way to fund
: progressive campaigns.***

Here's how to find the District Fund for each target race:

- Visit our [target races page](#) to view the complete list. Simply click on a race to get started.
- Scroll down to the "How to help" section.
- Follow the "Donate" button under the District fund section to go to the corresponding fundraising page.

Once you've picked a target race, there are two proven ways to raise grassroots dollars that we'd suggest:

Online Fundraising

In the same way that Bernie Sanders managed to do, raising little bits of money from thousands of people is an incredibly powerful (and cost-effective) way to support progressive campaigns.

Some tips for online fundraising:

- Set a realistic, but challenging, fundraising goal. This means your goal should be a stretch for you to achieve, but not so large that you have absolutely no idea how you'll get there.
- Create a timeframe to reach your goal. It's always good to create deadlines for yourself and for your donors to create a sense of urgency.
- Spend 20 minutes compiling an email list of people that you think will be interested in giving to your campaign. These don't necessarily need to be overtly political people, but sometimes people will give because you're asking and they want to support you.
- Post the link to your target race donate page on social media periodically and use a little social pressure by tagging friends that you think would be interested in giving. And be sure to tag friends in the comments or in future posts to thank them after they give!

Throw a House Party

It might seem overwhelming at first, but anyone can throw a successful house party. From having 5 to 10 people from your neighborhood over for a bbq to throwing a rager in your living room

Helping progressives win in 2018 (continued)

Throw a House Party (continued)

with a local band and a keg of good beer, there are many powerful (and fun) ways to raise grassroots money. Here are some tips:

- Choose a date for your party and be sure to begin telling people about it at least 2 weeks out.
- Create a Facebook event and invite everyone you think would be interested in the cause. Consider teaming up with a few other people and add them as “co-hosts” so they invite people from their network as well.
- Try to get a rough estimate of RSVPs so you have plenty of food and drink for folks.
- Have a few laptops or iPads on-hand so peo-

Mail a Check

You can send donations by mail to:

Colorado Resistance
PO Box 221
Boulder, CO 80306

ple can donate online right then and there using the ActBlue fundraising page for Colorado Resistance. If they leave without giving, the chances are slim that they’ll actually do it.

- Make an “ask”: It can either be you, a friend, or try to invite a local elected official and/or a well-known person in the community to make a little pitch for money. It’s always best to ask people to raise their hand in the crowd if they’re going to give. This creates an “all the cool kids are doing it” type of social pressure that motivates people to give more generously.
- Thank people! Once the event is over, follow up with an email, a handwritten note, or a phone call to thank people for donating.

NOTE: State law requires that all donations include the donor’s name, address, occupation, and employer. You **must** include this information on a separate sheet of paper when mailing checks.

Small Donor Committees

For state candidates, the best way regular people can leverage resources together (aside from donating directly to the candidate’s campaign) is to give through a Small Donor Committee.

Small Donor Committees are a vehicle for many people to come together and pool their money to have a larger impact than they could alone. The maximum contribution an individual can give to a Small Donor Committee is \$50. But a Small Donor Committee can give nearly \$5,000 to a candidate, which is significantly

more than the \$400 that a single individual is legally allowed to give to the candidate.

You’ll need to do a bit of paperwork and administrative work, but here’s the gist: (1) open a bank account (2) file a form with the Secretary of State, and (3) file periodic reports stating how much money you’ve raised and which candidates you’ve donated money to. For all of the details and directions, [*visit the Secretary Of State’s guide here >>*](#)

— Register voters in your districts —

Voter registration is one of the most effective things you can do in a closely contested legislative district. Everyone who is registered to vote will receive a ballot in the mail around election time, so it's also important to help people update their registration to make sure their ballot gets sent to their current address.

The easiest way to do voter registration is to reach out to a county Democratic Party or a local organization that already does some voter registration and have them provide you with the necessary materials and training. However, you can also start your own voter registration drive by

registering your group ([register online here >>](#)) and getting certified by completing an online training through the Secretary of State's office.

Voter registration is one of the most effective things you can do in a closely contested legislative district.

If you decide to run your own drive, be aware that there are a few rule that you'll need to be sure you and the rest of the people in your group follow! See the Secretary of State link above for all the details.

— Write letters to the editor or opinion columns —

A lot of voters still read their local newspapers' opinion sections, and it's a great way to reach people who might not spend a lot of time online. Go to the website of your local paper and get the guidelines for submitting a letter to the editor (LTE) or a guest opinion column. ALTE is generally about 150 words and a guest opinion column is typically around 500-750 words. Generally you just need to email your submission to the newspaper and include your name, city, and phone number for them to contact you if they have questions.

Be sure to keep your points in the submission tight and to the point. It's best to focus on something timely and to make it relatively specific (i.e. about the legislators' particularly bad vote on a bill or a comment they made at a town hall, etc.). Don't forget to also write positive

ones about an incumbent Democrat or about a progressive candidate who is challenging the Republican incumbent.

Tip: In either case, always be sure to mention elected officials and candidates by name. This maximizes your odds of triggering their staff's news alerts and getting your letter seen by your target.

It's best to submit LTE's / op-eds from varying authors on a regular basis, with slightly different points each time. For instance, 2-3 submissions from different people in the district each week will definitely help create some buzz throughout the community! If you don't live in the targeted district, then try to find a friend who does live in the district and get them to send in the LTE under their name.

Set up tables in the community

An effective way to get out there and talk to voters is by setting up a table in different spots throughout the community with a lot of foot traffic—outside of the local grocery store, by the public library, on a college campus, at a farmer’s market, etc. Be sure to have some literature/handouts about the legislator or candidate that people can take with them, information about your group, a volunteer signup form, voter registration forms, and any other materials you can think of to make your table informative and engaging. This type of activity is a great way

to recruit future volunteers for your group!

Tip: Make your table eye-catching! Balloons, clever signs, stickers and candy are just some of the ways you can encourage pedestrians to stop by.

You may not always be able to get permission to set up an actual table, but that’s okay! As long as you’re on public property you should be okay to talk to people with a clipboard and some handouts, which is often sufficient to have some good conversations with passerbys.

Go door-to-door talking to voters

If you want to get real sophisticated in which doors you’re targeting, we recommend reaching out to a county Democratic Party near you to ask for some help. As you get closer to election time, county Democratic Parties (and candidate campaigns!) will be more and more available to provide you with trainings, scripts, and a map of your turf.

But in the meantime, we still recommend you get out there, start knocking on doors, and talking to your neighbors—successful campaigns are built on personal connections!

You can use Google Maps or the map app on your phone to target a certain neighborhood in a target district and just go for it. Be sure to have some literature/handouts about the candidates you’re talking about so you can leave them with the voter. This is also a good opportunity to register voters and get people to sign up to volunteer with you if they’re really receptive.

It’s often good to have an “ask” at the door when talking to voters. This can be any of the following:

1. Pledge to vote in November for the progressive candidate
2. Providing their email address so you can keep in touch with them and add them to your group email list
3. Updating their voter registration form (if they need to)
4. Committing to talk to a few friends about the candidates and attending your group meetings

Ideally, you’ll want to tailor the conversation towards a specific issue that is (1) relevant to the district/community and (2) something that either the conservative candidate is especially bad on or the progressive candidate is a champion for.

Host a community town hall with/about the legislator

If the legislator does not hold very many public town halls for voters to attend, then

***: If the legislator does not hold
: very many public town halls
: for voters to attend, then
: demand one!***

demand one! You can do this by reaching out on social media, email, phone, etc. and ask-

ing them to hold a town hall so their voters can learn more about them. If they seem resistant, offer to organize the event for them—book the location, do the promotions, get a moderator, etc. If they still refuse, then hold the event anyway without them and use it as an opportunity to engage voters and educate them about the candidate/legislator's positions on issues.

Stay in touch

We will continue to publish new tools, scripts, in-depth district profiles, suggested actions, and additional supporting materials through election

day and beyond. Not to belabor the point, but you really should [*click here to sign up for updates*](#) to stay in the loop!

Example “scripts” for talking to voters:

Targeting Tim Neville in Senate District 16:

Tim Neville sponsored a bill to remove the permit requirement to carry a concealed gun in public. Colorado has basic and common sense gun laws. Will you call Sen. Tim Neville and tell him that he needs to listen to his constituents?

Working for Kerry Donovan in Senate District 5:

Senator Donovan is a champion for protecting our public lands. In 2016, she passed a bill to create Public Lands Day, which celebrates the value and economic benefit of having protections for public lands in Colorado and keeps them from being sold off to the highest bidder. Will you sign this postcard to Sen. Donovan thanking her for

listening to the concerns of her constituents? She's up for reelection in 2018 and we want to send a message to her that we have her back!

If you get a friendly response:

Thanks so much for your support! A group of us are getting organized to resist the Trump agenda by voting as many of his people as possible out in 2018. Would you be interested in joining us at our next organizing meeting?

(If so, collect their contact information and follow-up with an invite.)

conclusion

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Holly Hursley



Conclusion

We wrote this guide because we believe the stakes have never been higher. Donald Trump's presidency could be the absolute worst thing to happen to progressivism in America, or, conversely, one of the best. Which way we go is entirely up to us.

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

—President Barack Obama

State and local politics are an immensely powerful force. Republican's commitment to engaging in down-ballot races, combined with a failure on the part of the progressive movement to keep up, is perhaps the single biggest reason America finds herself in such a dire situation today.

But more than anything else, we want to leave you with this thought: **this is a winnable fight**. State and local elections are determined by just thousands, sometimes even hundreds, of votes. If we're thorough and strategic, we can and will change the outcomes of these races, making Colorado a national leader in the progressive move-

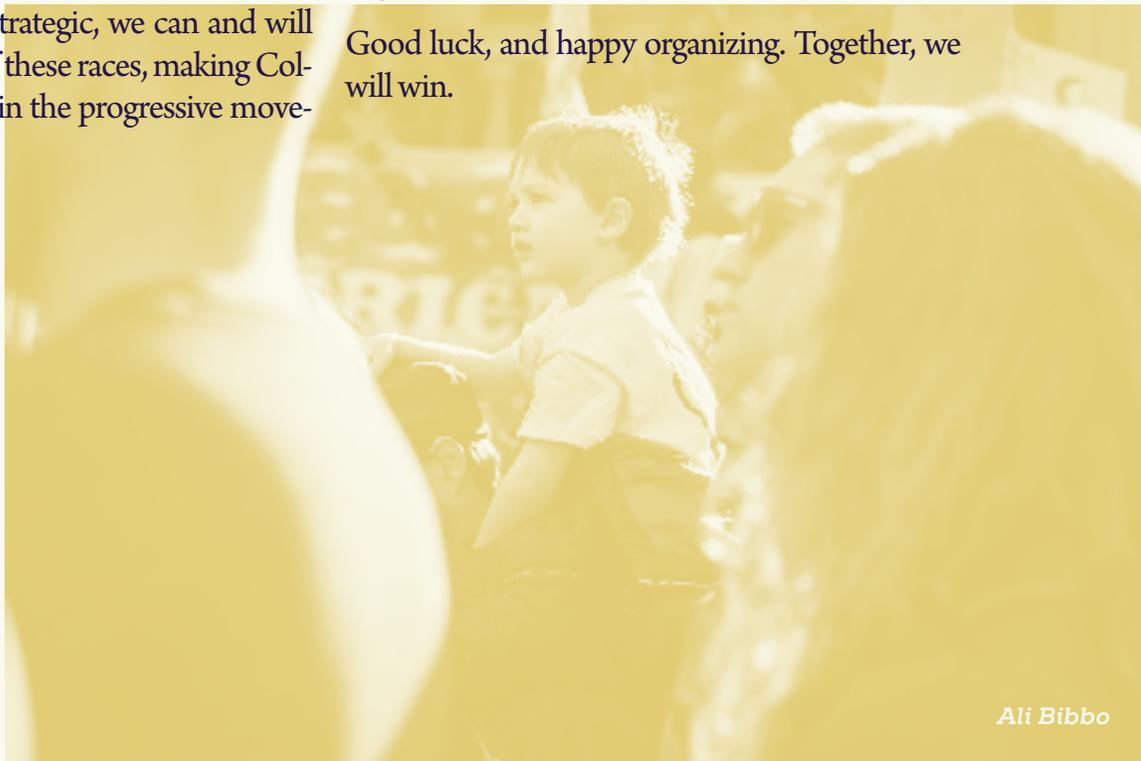
ment and protecting our home from Republican Gerrymandering for years to come.

Finally, this guide is intended as a work in progress, and will be continuously updated to reflect new research on tactics, candidates, and key races. *Make sure you subscribe for updates at [ColoradoResistance.org](https://coloradoreistance.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) to receive the latest updates and political intel.*

We are happy to offer support to anybody interested in building upon the tactics outlined in this guide. It is our sincere hope that progressive leaders from across the nation are able to use it as a starting point for guides to politics and elections in their own states, just as we drew inspiration from the federal [Indivisible Guide](#). If you find yourself in that camp and would like some pointers, please don't hesitate to reach out.

We hope that if you find it useful or put any of the tactics described above into action, or have any suggestions and feedback, you will let us know by emailing us at hello@coloradoreistance.org.

Good luck, and happy organizing. Together, we will win.





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acknowledgements

Layout by Blair Stapp

Copywriting by Mansur Gidfar & Steve Fenberg

Web Design by Kaity Hauge

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