

**Senator Jim Isgar**  
4-22-05

**It's time to make the smart move**  
**We need to invest in Colorado**

I've been working these past few weeks on the measures that will be referred to the voters this November. When going over all the cuts to the budget from the past few years, I think the referred measures, also called the Colorado Economic Recovery Act, is best summed up in one word: **investment**.

The Colorado Economic Recovery Act can look a little confusing at first. I'll try to let you know why I think it is a good idea.

There are two referenda that make up the Act, to address the impacts of the Colorado budget crisis—schools are struggling, roads are deteriorating, and state obligations are put on hold.

The first part of the Colorado Economic Recovery Act—Referendum C—will ask the voters to allow the state to invest revenues collected by the state over the next five years, while keeping tax rates the same. Referendum C will raise the state spending limits for five years. Meanwhile, Colorado will retain its status as one of the lowest taxed states in the country. Voters will be asked to give up the state sales tax refund for the next five years. That money, in turn, will be invested in the state.

What I've been working on is the second piece of the Colorado Economic Recovery Act. Referendum D is a \$2 billion bonding measure. Bonding will allow Colorado to address critical safety concerns for our roads and schools and completely restore the Fire and Police Pension Fund, releasing the state of its obligation. Bonding will also make it easier for the state to equally spread out available funds throughout the state, including to Southwest Colorado.

I think Referendum D will be a smart move for Colorado for a few reasons.

**Jump starting critical projects for roads and schools.** There are road projects throughout the state where construction has simply stopped, because funds have dried up. There has not been any significant building funding since 2001, resulting in higher maintenance costs to the state.

**The best 'bang for our buck.'** Taking advantage of historically low interest rates, Colorado will have relatively low repayment costs for bonding while providing a great deal of impact. The school and road investment projects will benefit from today's relatively low construction costs. If these projects are not completed soon, they will only increase in cost.

**Reducing the annual payments.** By managing payments for school construction and the Fire and Police Pension Fund through bonding, the state dramatically reduces the current annual costs.

**Restoring cuts.** The legislature has cut over \$1 billion from the state budget since the recession began, and while the economy is improving, the state cannot fully turn the corner under current budget restrictions. Bonding will free up money in the General Fund, enabling the state to restore cuts made to the State Education Fund, statewide capital construction, medical services for the elderly, mental health services and higher education grants.

I am glad that representatives and senators from both sides of the aisle support this measure, because they recognize how severe the budget cut will be without a solution.

When it comes to supporting K-12 education, Colorado ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the country. The state has been ordered by the court to fix condemned portion of schools, leaking roofs, over-crowded facilities, substandard plumbing, technology problems, accessibility issues, asbestos, and heating and cooling equipment. This is a problem because 70 school districts around the state don't have the bonding capacity to build one new school. Many of these districts are in rural areas.

We have seen road construction stop due to an empty state bank account, meanwhile 39 percent of Colorado roads are rated in "poor" condition.

Quality schools keep our communities strong, attracting businesses and families. Dependable and quality roads and highways are the lifeblood of Southwest Colorado, connecting our communities and businesses.

I have been working to make sure the needs in our part of the state are looked after. I think Referenda C and D will spread state investment beyond Denver and the Front Range. I'm looking forward to keeping you posted in the coming months, and feel free to contact my office if you have any questions.