

about *Believe in a Better Colorado*

Believe in a Better Colorado is an unprecedented alliance among the state's three largest K-12 education associations. The initiative is informing public school employees and citizens about the need to more effectively invest in essential public services – such as K-12 and higher education, health care and transportation. The ultimate goal is to adopt a new tax system by 2011. Efforts are under way to build a broad coalition representing business, health care, transportation and other stakeholder groups to work on tax reform.

Colorado's investments in *all* essential public services are below national averages. Below average is not good enough. It is our responsibility to create the future we want for ourselves and for our children. Colorado is a wealthy state. We rank eighth in the country in per capita income. Our taxes are among the lowest in the nation, yet Colorado invests \$1,034 per student less in K-12 schools than the national average. If Colorado were to invest per student like Wyoming *already* does, our state basically would meet the additional \$2.9 billion annually that the Colorado School Finance Project has forecast to be an adequate investment in public schools – not including maintaining or building facilities.

Our investment in the state's future is shrinking. TABOR, the 1992 constitutional amendment, keeps us from meeting Colorado's growing needs. Instead, Colorado should have a tax system that is fair to taxpayers and raises enough money to invest properly in citizens' needs. The "perfect storm" will hit in 2011, when the Referendum C time-out ends, Amendment 23 funding shrinks, but TABOR spending limits remain. At best, Colorado has only enough money to provide 2007 levels of service. This is not what we want as Colorado grows.

Education is the best investment Colorado can make. Research ties the quality of education to a community's quality of life. An educated and skilled local work force attracts jobs, improves productivity, creates a larger tax base and adds wealth to our communities. Colorado has the second highest percentage of college graduates in the nation, but we rank 32nd in sending our *own* high school graduates to college. That is important because over time, more jobs will require education beyond high school. Tomorrow's employees need to solve increasingly complex problems, communicate effectively using a variety of media, work in teams to create and innovate, and continually adapt to rapid change.

To make Colorado a land of opportunity for all in the 21st century, we have to start with education. Our top priority must be preparing our kids to be good citizens and to compete and prosper in a global economy. Everything builds on this foundation. If we fail in this, nothing else we do will matter much.

– The Bell Policy Center, 2006 *Blueprint for Opportunity*

For more data and information, visit www.believeinabettercolorado.org.

Colorado Association of School Boards
Colorado Association of School Executives
Colorado Education Association

www.believeinabettercolorado.org

