

Boulder County DSA

Voter Guide:

2018 Ballot Measures



**Boulder Democratic
Socialists of America**

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Boulder County DSA is a local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, the largest socialist organization in the US. We are a “big tent” organization: our members come from many backgrounds with many points of view, but we all agree on one thing—unchecked capitalism has created a society that puts corporate profit above human rights, and we are committed to changing that through direct, grassroots action.

Find out more about **Boulder County DSA** in this short video:
<https://tinyurl.com/WholsBoulderDSA>

Special thanks to all Boulder County DSA members who contributed their votes, time and labor to this project. Without your tireless volunteer efforts, this guide would not be possible!



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Boulder County DSA Endorsed Candidates

Cliff Willmeng

Boulder County Commissioner



Cliff is a socialist and longtime fighter for worker and community power. He is a practicing nurse, a union vice president and founding member of East Boulder County United. Cliff understands the conflict between workers and bosses, renters and landlords, and the fossil fuel industry and the communities it ravages. He also understands the need for workers to develop independent, grassroots power, power outside the influence of political parties and the economic system they represent. Once elected, Cliff will continue to consolidate this power, through the development of public sector unions, creation of a labor council and resistance to the hazardous extraction of fossil fuels from our communities.

Visit willmengforgrassrootspower.com to join his campaign.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE FOR CLIFF WILLMENG

Theresa Stets

District 12 of the Colorado House of Representatives



Theresa is a mother, activist and socialist. She understands that many threats to working communities originate at the state level, from policies that encourage fossil fuel extraction, to the weakening of public institutions through privatization. Theresa is determined to defend us against these threats. She supports a total moratorium on oil and gas permits in Colorado, will work to repeal the business-sponsored “Labor Peace Act,” which makes it difficult for workers to unionize within the state, and supports Medicare for All.

Visit stetsforhd12.com to join her campaign.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE FOR THERESA STETS

Colorado Statewide Measures

AMENDMENT A:

The Removal of Exception to Slavery Prohibition for Criminals Amendment

The Colorado state constitution bans slavery—*except* as an allowable punishment for convicted criminals. This amendment would remove this exception, banning slavery under all circumstances in the state of Colorado.

Boulder County DSA supports Amendment A unconditionally: slavery is an unacceptable evil. We also recognize that while this language takes a powerful ideological stance, it may do little to curb the practice of unpaid or negligibly paid prison labor due to the simple fact that prison operators choose not to define this labor as “slavery”.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

AMENDMENT V:

The Reduced Age Qualification for General Assembly Members Amendment

Amendment V would change the minimum age required to serve in the Colorado General Assembly as a representative or senator from 25 to 21. It would also add feminine pronouns to the requirements, i.e. changing the descriptions from “he” to “*he or she.*”

Boulder County DSA supports this amendment as we believe that representation in our government should be more inclusive—both in terms of age and gender. We also believe that this amendment should go *further* and utilize gender neutral language which recognizes multiple expressions of gender.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

AMENDMENT W:

The Judge Retention Ballot Language Amendment

This amendment would consolidate judge retention questions on the ballot into one question per level of the court system. It would also include both male and female pronouns when referring to judges.

Boulder County DSA does not take a stance on this issue. It may save valuable resources to print fewer lines of text, and we are in favor of more inclusive language, however this proposed change strikes us as utterly banal, and we must reiterate that when going through the trouble of making a constitutional amendment, our government should instead adopt gender neutral language.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

JUST VOTE

AMENDMENT X:

The Definition of Industrial Hemp Amendment

This amendment would remove the definition of “industrial hemp” from our state constitution, meaning Colorado would instead follow federal law in defining that range of products. The federal and state constitution definitions of “industrial hemp” are currently identical.

Boulder County DSA does not take a stance on this issue either.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

JUST VOTE

AMENDMENTS Y & Z:

The Redistricting & Gerrymandering Amendments

These amendments would establish independent non-partisan commissions tasked with creating “fair and competitive” congressional and legislative districts respectively. If passed, proponents claim that they will prevent partisan gerrymandering (redrawing districts for electoral advantage) to benefit certain candidates in elections.

Boulder County DSA strongly opposes both of these amendments. While we recognize that gerrymandering is a plague to our elections, we are deeply suspicious of this solution, which is openly supported and financially backed by right-wing groups and the oil & gas industry. We find the concept of a “non-partisan, independent commission” laughable—particularly since two thirds of the seats would be filled from the Republican and Democratic parties and the remaining seats would be chosen by a panel of “independent” retired judges. Further, while current congressional and legislative districts can be challenged in court, these panels would suffer no such oversight. Ultimately, we believe we can do better than an appointed panel of political insiders who will have no accountability to our courts. These amendments are another example of corporate interests attempting to undermine our democratic systems.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

AMENDMENT 73:

The Establish Income Tax Brackets & Raise Taxes for Education Initiative

Amendment 73 establishes tax brackets based on personal income levels and raises taxes for the wealthiest 8% of Coloradans to fund public education programs on a per pupil basis, as well as allocating money to special education, gifted and talented programs, English language proficiency programs, and preschool funding.

Boulder County DSA supports funding for public education and higher wages for education workers, as we see comprehensive and accessible education as the foundation of a democratic society. And of course we enthusiastically support progressive taxation—that is, proportionally greater taxation for the wealthy who have resources to spare!

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

AMENDMENT 74:

The Compensation to Owners for Decreased Property Value Due to State Regulation Initiative

Amendment 74 requires that the government award compensation to owners of private property whenever a government law or regulation reduces the market value of their property in any way.

Boulder County DSA vehemently opposes any policy that places property rights above human rights. Amendment 74 is a transparent bid by the oil and gas industry to protect their profits above our right to a safe and healthy environment. Should Amendment 74 pass, even common sense regulations such as safer setbacks would entitle the owner class to a payout. Our government should not have to pay corporations in order to protect its citizens.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

AMENDMENT 75:

The Campaign Contribution Limits Initiative

Colorado campaign finance law currently allows candidates to spend an unlimited amount of their personal funds on their own campaigns, but limits the contributions from individual donors. This amendment would change campaign finance contribution limits and requirements, so that campaign donation maximums for individuals are multiplied by 5 if a candidate in the race has spent \$1 million or more on his or her own campaign.

We oppose this amendment, which is couched in campaign finance reform, but in reality paves the way for the rich and powerful to donate even more money in competitive races. We would support campaign finance reform that actually reduces the influence of the wealthy on our electoral system.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

PROPOSITION 109:

The “Fix Our Damn Roads” Transportation Bond Initiative

This proposition hopes to authorize \$3.5 billion in bonds whose proceeds would be used to fund transportation projects. The incurred debt would accrue interest, resulting in a repayment from the state’s general fund that is not to exceed \$5.2 billion.

Boulder County DSA opposes saddling the government with debt in place of raising taxes to fund important public works projects.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

PROPOSITION 110:

The “Let’s Go Colorado” Transportation Bond & Sales Tax Increase Initiative

Similar to Prop 109, this initiative proposes to fund transportation infrastructure by authorizing \$6 billion in bonds and paying back those bonds over 20 years with a 0.62% increase in state sales tax. According to the initiative, the money raised will be spent in three areas: 45% to the *State Highway Fund*, 40% to the *Local Transportation Priorities Fund*, and 15% to *Multimodal Transportation Options Fund*.

Boulder County DSA opposes this proposition for the following reasons: it is funded through a regressive sales tax; the majority of the money raised goes to unsustainable highway expansion and maintenance; money going into local city funds can be used in harmful public-private partnerships; and the amount of funding for public transit is unacceptably low. We support constructing a transportation network which is not reliant on fossil fuels, depends primarily on mass transit, and does not have a history of destroying city centers and minority neighborhoods as the American highway system does.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

PROPOSITION 111:

The Restricting Predatory Lending Practices Proposition

This measure broadens language that constitutes unfair or deceptive trade practices for predatory lenders (“payday loans”), limits the finance charge to a maximum annual percentage rate of 36%, and eliminates all other financing charges and fees associated with payday lending.

We support this proposition and also call for further restrictions on predatory loan practices.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

PROPOSITION 112:

The Minimum Distance Requirements for New Oil, Gas, & Fracking Projects Initiative

This proposition would mandate that new oil and gas development projects—including fracking—be a minimum distance of 2,500 feet from occupied buildings and other areas designated as vulnerable, such as water sources, homes, playgrounds and schools.

Boulder County DSA strongly supports this proposition and we call for even stricter legislation to protect our homes from the ravages of fossil fuel extraction. We do fear that the legislature, in thrall to the oil and gas industry, will overturn this proposition after its democratic passage. However, a win for Prop 112 will still cost the oil and gas industry millions of dollars and will halt new development for several months.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

Local Measures

BOULDER

COUNTY ISSUE 1A:

Alternative Sentencing Facility & Jail Modernization Sales & Use Tax Extension

This proposal would extend the existing countywide sales and use tax which expires at the end of 2019. The revenue would fund the construction of an alternative sentencing facility, expansion and consolidation of alternative sentencing and offender management programs, and renovation and reconfiguration of the existing jail.

The Boulder County DSA is opposed to the carceral state and any programs designed to expand it. We fear that further development of the implements of the prison industrial complex in Boulder County will lead to increased arrests—particularly within vulnerable groups such as the houseless and the mentally ill. While we appreciate arguments that this funding would increase the comfort of the incarcerated and alleviate overcrowding, we cannot support the expansion of prison facilities. A softer, nicer prison is still a prison. Additionally, this initiative implicitly supports prison slave labor through the construction of a central facility which would run such a program. Finally, we oppose this measure on the basis that it requires the extension of a regressive sales tax. We seek radically different solutions, and by this vote we hope to send the message to Boulder County: dismantle our broken carceral system.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2C:

Imposition of Oil & Gas Pollution Tax

This proposal would levy a tax on all oil and gas extracted within the City of Boulder.

Doubtless there are terrible environmental, social, and health costs to oil and gas extraction that must be addressed, but we view this proposed tax as a weak symbolic gesture that continues the city's short-sighted and isolationist position on drilling in our state. We call for a *full ban* on new oil and gas extraction in Boulder County and find this proposal to be a distraction. If passed, this measure would continue to provide Boulder with a progressive environmentalist veneer without requiring our government to actually enact the radical changes required to halt global warming and protect our communities. At worst, this measure would legitimize more extraction, asking only a pittance from the deep coffers of oil and gas companies in return.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2D:

Authorize Retention of All Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Tax Revenue

In 2016 Boulder voters approved a tax on the sale of sugar-sweetened drinks. The tax did little to curb the sale of such items, its purported intent, but it did raise about \$5.2 billion in revenue for the city—about \$1.4 billion more than anticipated. Colorado’s Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR) requires that any excess tax revenue be refunded. This proposal would authorize the City of Boulder both to continue the sugary drink tax at its current rate, and to keep *all* of the revenue generated.

We view the sugary drink tax as a regressive tax which should be discontinued, however in the interim, we support the redistribution of funds to benefit the health and well-being of the community.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2E:

Charter Amendments for Initiative, Referendum & Recall Processes

This ballot question proposes several changes to the City Charter designed to clarify initiative, referendum, and recall processes. Most of it is technical, but importantly, it lowers the number of signatures required to get items onto the ballot.

Our chapter views these changes as positive steps toward making it easier for citizens to participate in local government.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2F:

Charter Amendment for Initiative Petition Signature Verification

When processing petitions, the city clerk currently verifies the name, address and date of petition signatures against local records. This proposed change would require the clerk to verify the signatures themselves against a state database.

We are adamantly opposed to any proposal that makes it more difficult for people to participate in their governance. Verifying signatures strikes us as a colossal waste of time, personnel, and resources—and one that seems particularly designed to undercut the success of Ballot Question 2G.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2G:

Charter Amendment Related to Electronic & Online Petitions

This amendment to the City Charter would allow the use of electronic petitions and online signing for initiative, referendum, and recall petitions.

Boulder County DSA strongly supports this amendment, which would encourage civic participation, make signature gathering less arduous, and would enable citizens to make thoughtful and informed decisions.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2H:

Charter Amendment Related to Advisory Commissions

This ballot question proposes a few changes to structures and language describing the council's advisory commissions in the City Charter. Most importantly, these changes would allow the council to set advisory commission size at 5-7 people, use gender inclusive language in describing member criteria, and expand the size of the Housing Advisory Board to seven members.

Our chapter supports the expansion of the council's advisory commissions—particularly as they can amplify perspectives and identities that are underrepresented on the council such as people of color, renters, parents of young children, immigrants, people of various gender identities, and low-income workers.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE YES

CITY BALLOT ISSUE 2I:

Charter Amendment for Planning Department Budget Recommendations

This amendment impacts the internal timelines of city staff when proposing capital improvements in relation to public hearings on the city budget.

Our chapter does not take a stance on this issue as it proposes an internal change with no apparent impact on the public.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

JUST VOTE

BALLOT ISSUE 2A:

Oil and Gas Pollution Tax

This ballot issue proposes a tax on all oil and gas extracted in the city of Lafayette.

There is already a ban on fracking and drilling on the books in Lafayette—the Climate Bill of Rights and Protections—so our chapter must ask: why bother taxing it? We raise the same objections that we did to Boulder’s nearly identical measure (see *City of Boulder Ballot Issue 2C: Imposition of Oil and Gas Pollution Tax*), but above all we fear that the Lafayette City Council would spin the passage of this tax as implied permission from voters to allow extraction in their backyards. This laughably small tax would not put a dent in Oil and Gas profits, much less discourage or prevent drilling. The revenue from this tax would, however, give these corporations the opportunity to rebrand their activities as a socially-conscious community benefit. We reject such platitudes. Fracking and drilling are destroying the health of our people, the integrity of our land, the cleanliness of our air and water, and the future of our climate. They must be banned not taxed.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

BALLOT ISSUE 3A:

Revenue Bonds for Funding the Rehabilitation & Improvement of City Buildings

This ballot issue proposes that the city of Longmont take on \$16 million in debt—with repayment not to exceed \$26.6 million—to renovate city buildings including the civic center, library, justice center, and other facilities.

Our chapter strongly opposes taking out private debt to fund public projects. This proposal, backed by right-wing conservatives, would cost our city an additional \$10 million in interest payments alone, enriching the corporate finance industry and hurting Longmont.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

BALLOT ISSUE 3B:

Revenue Bonds for Funding Fire Station Renovation or Replacement

This issue proposes that Longmont take on \$9.6 million in debt—with repayment not to exceed \$15.5 million—to renovate or replace Fire Stations #2 and #6.

Again, Boulder County DSA opposes taking on private debt to fund public projects.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

BALLOT ISSUE 3C:

Revenue Bonds for Funding Recreation Improvements

This issue proposes that Longmont incur \$6.8 million in debt—with repayment not to exceed \$11 million—for recreation improvements for the Centennial pool, golf course irrigation systems, and the Ute Creek golf course maintenance facility.

You guessed it: Boulder County DSA opposes taking on private debt to fund public projects: particularly golf courses.

Boulder County DSA Recommends:

VOTE NO

A Call to Action

Are you angry about inequality and injustice in the US? Do you see the problems of racism, sexism, xenophobia and poverty getting worse rather than better? Are you finished with electing representatives that vote with their donors and not their constituents?

It's time to radically re-define US democracy. Workers have a right to participate in the decisions of their employers. Residents of a community have the right to say whether oil companies can put wells next to their children's schools. That the wealthiest country in the world can't adequately feed, shelter, and medically treat all of its citizens is a travesty and embarrassment.

With American life expectancy falling, the wealth gap growing, the public education system under siege, and a President who is the worst example of a racist, sexist, and incredibly incompetent boss with no virtue but his extreme wealth—we are not waiting for someone to save us with promises of hope and change. This time, change will come from below, and it will be overwhelming. Join us and fight. Join us and win.

In solidarity,

—Boulder County Democratic Socialists of America

