

INDEPENDENT

Inking

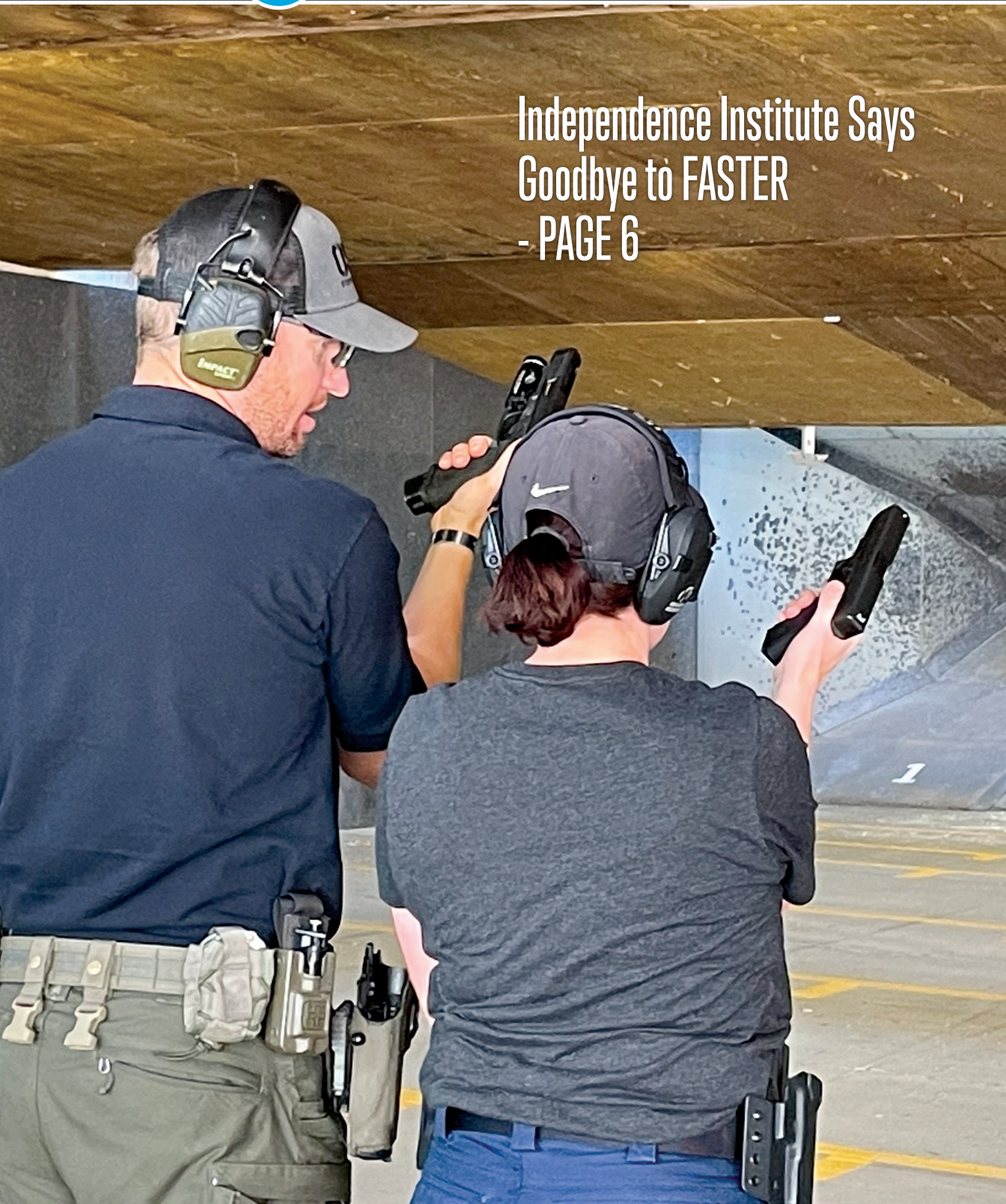
SUMMER | 2023

A publication of



INDEPENDENCE
INSTITUTE.ORG

Independence Institute Says
Goodbye to FASTER
- PAGE 6





THINK FREEDOM

WE ARE AN ACTION TANK AND A PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM FOR LIBERTY.

A central role of an effective think tank is to produce quality research and analysis. Since 1985, we have provided research resulting in changes in law and policy. But we have never been content with just research. We are more than a think tank. We are an "action tank." We put our ideas into action through groundbreaking litigation, coalition building, work on ballot initiatives, new media and investigative reporting. We don't just fight on paper. We fight for freedom on the streets, in the statehouse, in the media, on the ballot, and in the courts.

The mission of the Independence Institute is to empower individuals and to educate citizens, legislators and opinion makers about public policies that enhance personal and economic freedom.



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Gov. Polis has His Own Secret Police

By Jon Caldara, President

They create their laws without the approval or even review of any of our directly elected representatives. We must live by their edicts or be punished as they see fit and the governor has sole tyrannical authority to appoint his secret police, just like Stalin.

OK, maybe that's a bit of an overstatement. **Maybe.**

Since we just recently celebrated the Fourth of July, it's worth remembering our forefathers dumped a bunch of tea into a harbor to protest "taxation without representation." So, the idea that we directly elect our representatives to make policy decisions is an indispensable, foundational American value.

When one guy appoints his cronies—stooges we don't directly elect—and those thugs make decisions we must live by, well that's the opposite of representative government.

Even if we did elect that guy to sign or veto bills, it brings us a lot closer to why we threw a bunch of tea into a harbor when he does an end-run around our representatives.

Let's take our state legislature, as overwhelmingly progressive as they are. They considered a bill to prohibit the sale and even advertising of devices with "small, off-road engines" — such as lawn mowers and leaf blowers. And they refused to pass it.

I repeat: our duly elected representatives, who were sworn in without Capitol riots or insurrections, these ultra progressive legislators declined to outlaw gasoline-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers. So controversial, so disliked was the idea of banning these items the Democrat who wrote the bill had to pull the anti-lawn mower/leaf blower language out of his **Senate Bill 22-138** for it to survive.

So, as we just learned, the governor's unelected secret police might **just outlaw the mowers** despite our elected representatives' expressed votes. Who are these Stasi? They are called the **Air Quality Control Commission**. They are as powerful as the unelected, all-governor-appointed Public Utilities Commission, the good mafioso folks who continue to raise our electric rates for their buddies at Xcel. And "mafioso" power isn't an overstatement. For both these two commissions (even that sounds mobbed-up) answer to only one Don. Don Polis.

All this begs a simple question: Shouldn't a legislature that's willing to ban shopping bags be more than willing to criminalize the preferred choice of violent drug lords when they're gardening — those gas-powered, assault leaf blowers?



Legal Credibility Across the Political Spectrum

By Dave Kopel

One of the ways Independence Institute is different from some other public policy organizations is that we always tell the truth. One way to see this is how courts use our scholarship.

In 2022 and 2023, my scholarship has been cited in 21 different opinions from U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals, U.S. District Courts, and state courts. The opinions are almost evenly split between opinions that declare a particular gun control to be unconstitutional versus opinions that uphold a particular control.

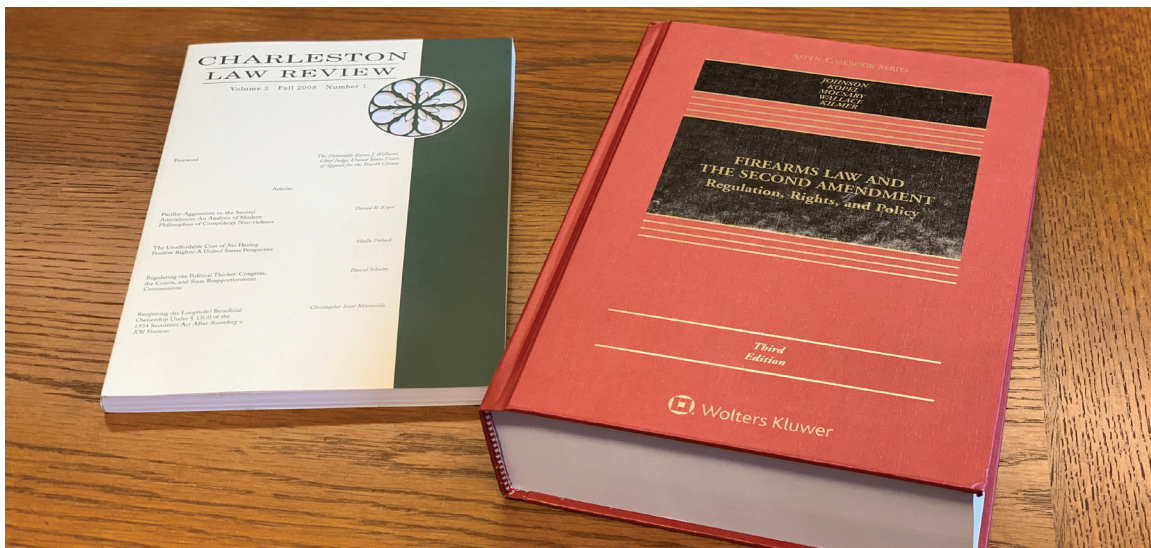
For example, my work was cited in one case that held a ban on so-called “assault weapons” to be unconstitutional, and another case that upheld such a ban. Both cases were from U.S. District Courts in Illinois.

Likewise, I have been cited in New York and New Jersey cases ruling against laws that made most of those states off-limits to licensed handgun carry, by declaring almost all of both of those states to be “sensitive places” where carry is prohibited. Conversely, I have also been cited by the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico and by the U.S. District Courts for Maryland and the Virgin Islands in cases upholding more narrowly-defined “sensitive places.”

Because the U.S. Supreme Court in the June 2022 decision *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* cited my Charleston Law Review article on “sensitive places,” that article often gets cited by lower courts these days. But the courts don’t use me just for one important article; the citations to me in the last two have come from 15 different sources, including one of my law school textbooks, congressional testimony, and a variety of scholarly articles.

From the many things I have written, judges pick and choose what they want to use. Sometimes I don’t agree with the outcome of a particular opinion in which my work is cited. That’s okay. I write accurate articles, and judges use them as they see fit. Unlike some authors, I don’t trim inconvenient facts from my articles; I tell the whole truth.

Separate from my articles, I do write amicus briefs that argue for a particular outcome in a given case. For my legal scholarship, however, the most important job is not to convince the reader of my point of view, although I certainly try to do that. The top objective is to help courts, other scholars, and the general public accurately understand a given topic. That requires presenting all the relevant facts and legal history, and not just the parts I find most congenial. It’s the right thing to do, and it is one of the reasons Independence Institute has so much credibility across the philosophical spectrum.



Dave Kopel

Dave Kopel is Director of our Second Amendment Project and our Research Director. He is also an adjunct scholar with the Cato Institute in Washington; and adjunct professor of advanced constitutional law at University of Denver’s Sturm College of Law.

Don't Believe the Lies of Proposition HH

By Ben Murrey

Have you heard that Proposition HH will forever end taxpayer refunds under Colorado's Taxpayer's Bill of Rights? Have you heard that if the measure passes, Coloradans will still see the largest increase in their property taxes ever? If so, you can thank Independence Institute's fiscal policy center.

Both statements come verbatim from a YouTube video put out by the center right after Governor Polis unveiled his boondoggle of a plan to address rising property taxes. The video got over 12,000 views and caused the truth of Proposition HH to echo across the state.

The impending property tax crisis has taken Coloradans by storm since our last issue of Independent Inking. Our fiscal policy center was the first to see the storm in the distance and has led the center-right movement in its preparation and response.

The Left is always planning ahead. Always scheming. It's no coincidence that Governor Polis waited until the very last week of the session to release his property tax proposal. It's no coincidence that he announced Proposition HH the day every Coloradan got their 2023 notices of valuation in the mail showing massive property tax increases. The Right is too often reactive, letting the Left make the first move.

Independence Institute is the outlier. When Governor Polis released Proposition HH, we were already prepared thanks to the work of our fiscal policy center.

Anticipating the panic that would ensue when Colorado homeowners got their notices of valuation in late April and how politicians would exploit the crisis to go after TABOR, we launched a video series to begin educating the public on the issue in mid-March.

When Polis announced his plan on May 1st, I attended the press conference so that I'd be the first to get the details of the plan. After the press conference, I immediately began getting information to the public through a firestorm of viral tweets about the measure. Within a couple days, Denver news anchor Kyle Clark was echoing our talking points.

On May 5th, we released our 6th video on Colorado property taxes. This one addressed Proposition HH head on, telling Coloradans everything our politicians wouldn't.

The work of the fiscal policy center was multiplied through op-eds, a dozen-and-a-half radio interviews, television appearances, and additional media coverage across the state, including from major outlets like CPR news. And we've continued to educate the public on the issue through additional videos in our YouTube property tax series, which has received a total of over 60,000 views.

After the issue blew up and HH became front-and-center in state news and politics, others joined us and have helped to spread the message we initiated in those first few critical days.

Because Independence Institute operates through the generous support of our donors—because we work for a mission and not for a profit—we don't have to chase the latest breaking news as others do. That's why we were able to begin educating the public and preparing for Proposition HH well before anyone else.

We *anticipate* what nobody is paying attention to yet. We do the difficult but necessary work nobody else wants to do *in advance* of the big battles. We dig the trenches and build the ramparts when nobody else is on the battlefield yet.

Other organizations and activists all want to be the hero—the knight in shining armor who rides in on his steed in the middle of an ongoing battle and gets all the praise when the battle is won. If not for our work and the support of our partners who enable it, however, there would be no heroes because there would be no victory to celebrate.



Ben Murrey

Ben Murrey serves as Director of Fiscal Policy, working to promote fiscal responsibility in Colorado government and to defend the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights.

FASTER Colorado an Independence Institute Success Story

By Jon Caldara

In 2016, when Laura Carno came back from a FASTER Saves Lives class in Ohio, with the idea to start something like it here, we were all in. In Ohio, they had been training armed educators since the days following the massacre of children and staff at Sandy Hook Elementary. We thought, why shouldn't Colorado's school children be the safest in the nation?

Amy Cooke, Independence Institute's Executive Vice President at the time, told Laura that this is what we do at Independence. We incubate great ideas, see them to their next stage, and then spin them off to run on their own. Amy also called Laura "a woman possessed" to get this off the ground in Colorado.

And that is what is happening now with FASTER Colorado. This month, Laura and her team are leaving the nest, having become too big and complex to operate under another organization. We could not be more proud of the work Laura has done to make FASTER what it is. And we could not be more proud to be part of an "action tank" that invests in projects like FASTER.

Laura had her first FASTER Colorado class less than a year after coming back from Ohio. She had sourced instructors, ranges, and supplies. She went all over Colorado raising money. The most difficult task: finding schools to attend that first class. In 2017, armed schools weren't really talking about it.

In the past 7 years, FASTER Colorado has trained over 300 school employees who are armed every day on K-12 campuses to protect the children. They are in 37 school districts in Colorado. And just since the shooting at Coventry Christian in Nashville, the team at FASTER is working with 29 additional school districts who are in various stages of the process to authorize armed educators on campus.

Fast forward to 2023, and the attitude toward armed staff programs has changed. Now, it's common to see public town halls where this important component of school safety is discussed openly. When there is, tragically, a school shooting somewhere in the country, Laura is often one of the first people members of national media call on, to make sense of what happened, and to talk about potential solutions.

When we step back and take a look at this accomplishment, investing in a project that has the potential to actually save lives, we are honored to have been a part of it. FASTER Colorado will always be an Independence Institute success story.

You will still see Laura at our annual ATF Party, and other places where good people meet. And as always, you can follow her work at FASTERColorado.org.



The High Cost of 100% Renewable Electricity by 2040

By Jake Fogleman

Governor Polis has made his promise of “100 percent renewable energy by 2040” a fixture of his tenure in office. Yet his administration has been noticeably tight-lipped about what such a transition would cost and whether it would even be feasible without seriously undermining the reliability of the electric grid.

Since no one else has been willing to answer these critical questions, our Energy and Environmental Policy Center has stepped up to the plate with a new paper to do just that.

The new report, entitled *Colorado's Energy Future: The High Cost of 100% Renewable Electricity by 2040*, relies on detailed modeling commissioned by Independence Institute and conducted by energy researchers at the Center of the American Experiment to put a total price tag on the state's energy transition while evaluating the reliability implications that come with it.

Some of the key findings of the report include:

- Colorado Governor Jared Polis's goal of a 100 percent renewable (wind, solar, and batteries) electric grid by 2040 (a.k.a. the “Polis Plan”) would cost the state \$318.8 billion through 2050.
- That total cost is the equivalent of each Colorado electricity customer—households, commercial businesses, and industrial users—paying an additional \$3,540 annually through 2050. Colorado households alone would expect to pay an average of an additional \$1,800 per year on their electricity bills.
- Colorado electricity customers would see their average monthly electricity bills increase to as much as \$628 by 2040.
- Under the Polis plan, Colorado would experience 25 hours of blackouts spread across three separate events in January and early February 2040 if electricity demand and wind and solar output are the same as they were in the year 2021.
- Colorado could meet Polis's electric-sector decarbonization goals on the same timeline, without reliability issues and at just over a quarter of the cost, by transitioning the state's generating assets to nuclear energy.

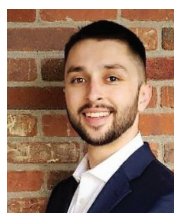
The report arrives after a winter in which Coloradans suffered crushing energy bills while state lawmakers continued adding fuel to the fire with numerous new climate mandates.

Meanwhile, those same lawmakers killed attempts to include nuclear energy in Colorado to help meet the state's carbon goals while protecting the stability of the electric grid and ratepayers' monthly bills.

Polling data shows that Coloradans prioritize affordability and reliability above all else in energy policy. A strong majority also support adding nuclear energy to Colorado's energy mix.

Armed with this report, our energy experts will continue to educate policymakers and the public about the importance of sensible energy policy that guarantees reliable access to energy at low costs, while still making improvements to environmental outcomes.

Affordable and reliable access to energy is the bedrock of any prosperous society. Coloradans should not be forced to sacrifice on either of those fronts for the sake of ideological preferences in energy policy.



Jake Fogleman

Jake Fogleman is a research associate with the Energy and Environmental Policy Center. He is a cum laude graduate of Metropolitan State University of Denver, where he studied political science and economics. Jake is a Colorado native.

Communicating in New Ways!

Now you can access Independence Institute's content almost anywhere. From social media, to YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Music, important information from our policy experts is at your fingertips.

The response we are getting from these new communication avenues is explosive. Take a moment to scan the QR codes below to check out our new work & join the fun!



CONSTITUTIONAL COMMENTS

THINK YOU KNOW THE CONSTITUTION?

Our constitutional expert, Rob Natelson, hosts a deep dive into the U.S. Constitution and what the founders really meant.



CALDARA GETS THE SCOOP
Watch or just listen to our series of in-depth policy discussions with the experts, hosted by Jon Caldara.



**KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST UPDATES
FROM OUR POLICY CENTERS**

Check out these social media pages to learn about upcoming events, new articles, and recent findings.



**WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
COLORADO'S PROPERTY TAXES?**

Check out the short video series from our Fiscal Policy Center about the current tax mess our government has created.



**FREEDOM
UNAFFILIATED**
AN INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE PODCAST



DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ THE NEWS?

Listen to our 10-minute updates on specific topics from the experts at Independence Institute.

Another Local Government Success Story

By Sean Langlais

My desire to fight against the growing government bureaucracy in Colorado led me to the Independence Institute's Local Government Training Workshop in October 2019. In this valuable class, taught by the wonderful Kathleen Chandler, I shockingly learned that at the time there



Sean Langlais

were over 4,000 governing bodies in Colorado, many with taxable authority. This number is now over 5,000 governing bodies and largely volunteer based. Ms. Chandler also outlined how the left took over Colorado, in part by focusing on these small local boards. She encouraged all liberty-minded citizens to get involved and volunteer for service on one of these governing bodies that control our lives.

In early 2021 I applied through my county's website to serve on a volunteer board. Eventually, I was selected to serve on the Board of Adjustment under the Building and Planning Department. Through this board, members of the public can request a variance on a specific aspect of their construction project, typically variances related to measurements. Each board member's decision must fall within the standards set forth by the bylaws and legal requirements by the County Commissioners or the state. The Board of Adjustment is somewhat unique in that the decisions are legally binding and may only be appealed to a district court.

As an associate member, my participation is limited to meetings and includes: asking questions about a project, offering points of discussion to the other board members, making motions to approve or deny a project, and ultimately voting. The time commitment is relatively small, with the board meeting only one day per month, usually less than two hours per meeting. If no projects are pending, no meeting is held.

As a liberty-minded citizen, I find the most challenging aspect of serving on the Board of Adjustment is weighing the request of a citizen versus the planned design from the county and desires of the community. While I have yet to rein in government bureaucracy, serving on the Board of Adjustment serves a valuable role for the citizens who desire relief from the codes enforced by the building and planning department to complete their project.

Recently, a seemingly insignificant dilemma was created when the Building and Planning department wanted to meet with individual board members outside of meetings, which is technically allowed under the law. However, this seemed unethical as it was behind closed doors. Fortunately, I was able to express my opinion to the director, after contacting Ms. Chandler at the Independence Institute about my ethical concerns. Her input was invaluable. While unlikely to create any change or impact, perhaps others will think more about the ethics of seemingly insignificant decisions.

I strongly encourage all liberty-loving Americans to learn about their local governing bodies or boards—ideally through Ms. Chandler's class—and volunteer to serve. The more liberty-minded citizens that are involved in government, the more we can rein in government, and the happier and freer we will all be!



LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

Learn the skills needed to apply for local positions and to serve as an effective leader.

NEXT CLASS: AUGUST 24, 6:30 PM

TO REGISTER:
i2i.org/local-gov



Complete Colorado Takes State Health Care Agency to Court

By Mike Krause

In March, *Complete Colorado* reporter Sherrie Peif dropped a Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) request on the state Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), asking for communications concerning hospital-related bills introduced in the recent legislative session. The agency initially responded that there were well over a thousand records in emails alone, but eventually handed over only 318 documents, claiming the rest to be exempted by either attorney-client privilege or deliberative process privilege. This after charging us \$2,500 for their trouble.

At *Complete Colorado*, we take government transparency seriously, so naturally we sent in the lawyers. In late June, attorneys at the Denver law firm Jackson Kelly filed a petition in Denver District Court to compel HCPF to show cause for holding back those public records.

The CORA request

The records request is part of an investigation that *Complete Colorado* began in March into three bills that appear to have flowed out of previous claims by Governor Polis and HCPF that hospitals are making record profits, retaining record reserves, and spending less money to benefit the communities in which they operate.

HCPF pushed out a report in January that “supported” their accusations. However, hospital organizations began pushing back saying the information was outdated and inaccurate. Acting on a tip about coordination on the bills from within HCPF, Peif filed the CORA request asking for emails or other correspondence to or from several of its employees in relation to the bills.

And indeed, among the few records HCPF did release were emails that showed coordination between the department, Gov. Polis’ office and progressive activists, who in turn have connections to legislators carrying the very hospital bills in question, all of which *Complete Colorado* reported on during the legislative session. The bills in question; House bill 1215, House Bill 1243, and House Bill 1226 were passed by the Democrat-controlled legislature and signed into law by Governor Polis.

What HCPF says

“Disclosure of any pre-decisional draft documents at this time would endanger the frank and honest discussion and exchange of ideas within the government,” reads the “privilege log” regarding the well over a thousand withheld emails provided to *Complete Colorado*.

The “pre-disclosure draft” reasoning behind HCPF’s withholding of emails seems to signal that more changes to the way health care is handled in Colorado are likely to come in the next session while Democrats hold an unprecedented majority in the legislature.

HCPF also bizarrely claims that transparency can lead to public injury. “The frank exchange of ideas and opinions as set out in these documents, is critical to the government’s decision-making process,” said Kathy Snow, the records custodian for HCPF, as part of her denial of the emails. “And public disclosure of these records would discourage such discussion in the future and may cause substantial injury to the public interest.”

We couldn’t disagree more. We think Coloradans deserve maximum transparency as to how bills like these come together and who is behind them, especially when being pushed by a taxpayer-funded state agency, and we’re willing to go to court to find out.

Since the initial request in March, Sherrie has filed several more significant open records requests on HCPF, so stay tuned for more and don’t forget to regularly check in with *Complete Colorado* for updates to the story.



Mike Krause

Mike Krause is Editor-in-Chief of *Complete Colorado*. A former ski instructor and construction carpenter, Mike was a Senior Fellow and editorial writer at II before heading up *Complete Colorado*.

Meet Our Summer 2023 Interns



Paul Joshua Bustamante
Northglenn, CO
Hillsdale College

Why did you want to work at Independence Institute? In my internship search, I wanted to gain professional experience in my interest areas of law, public policy, and economics while also making a difference in my community. The Fiscal Policy Internship at Independence Institute provides knowledge in each academic area, while also having a direct impact on Colorado. While many think tanks remain removed from the issues they discuss and rebut, Independence Institute is devoted

to concretely influencing ballot results by communicating issues to voters through palatable mediums.

What are your plans post-internship? I will finish my last two years of my undergrad at Hillsdale College, obtaining my Bachelor of Science in both Economics and Mathematics. Afterwards, I plan on attending law school and entering the legal profession.



Anna Grace Holloway
Fort Collins, CO
University of Texas at Austin, studying Philosophy and Government in the Liberal Arts Honors Program

Why did you want to work at Independence Institute? The Future Leaders Program was the perfect fit for me as a structured and supportive internship. I'm able to explore public policy under the guidance of a wonderful mentor and in a liberty-minded environment filled with intelligent and humorous people.

What are your plans post-internship? I will be heading straight back to the Texas heat to begin my second year of college, but my ultimate goal is law school!



Ben McDougall
Severna Park, MD
University of Denver, Sturm College of Law

Why did you want to work at Independence Institute? I want to work to protect and expand our 2nd Amendment rights. I firmly believe that people from all backgrounds, identities, and ideologies should be able to protect themselves and their families with firearms. I believe this right has both achieved its zenith under the current jurisprudence, while at the same being under unprecedented attack.

What are your plans post-internship? After my internship I plan on continuing my legal studies and gaining internship experience in other fields such as administrative or energy law. I hope to one day work in criminal defense law, constitutional law, energy law, and/or administrative law.

Stick with us and hang out with interesting people who are changing the world! The Independence Institute recently teamed with The Federalist Society to sponsor a Continuing Legal Education Seminar for lawyers to present our twist on the requirement of the Colorado Supreme Court that lawyers must attend mandated seminars on “equity, diversity, inclusivity.”

Among the excellent speakers were John Hughes and Adam Montana, both former law clerks for Justice Clarence Thomas. Notably these attorneys represented the plaintiffs in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* before the US Supreme Court. The Court sided with the plaintiffs and struck down many aspects of affirmative action.

Lawyers can view a video on our website of the entire CLE presentation and get credit by signing and submitting the accreditation affidavit.



We Start 'Em Young

See Jon run. Hear Jon and others talk. Read and learn about liberty. See Teddy the dog sleep.....

One day these youth will be policy makers and defenders of our liberties. In the meantime, they are eagerly reading about the importance of individual freedoms and the intelligent expressions of ideas for the future of our country. Between naps.



Pam's Granddaughter



Mary's son



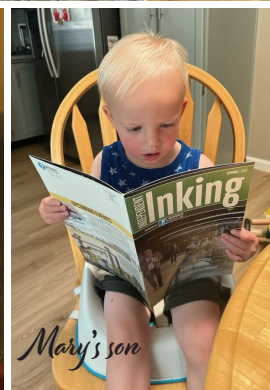
Eric's daughter



Margo's pooch



Ben's sons



Mary's son

The Constitution is Going Digital

By Jon Caldara

But first, let's tell you about some other exciting news:

So far this term, published research of Rob Natelson, our Senior Fellow in Constitutional Jurisprudence, has been cited (explicitly relied on) by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas 11 times in three cases.

This is in addition to over two dozen prior citations of Rob's work by Chief Justice John Roberts, Justices Samuel Alito and Thomas, and the late Justice Antonin Scalia. In addition, Rob was the principal author of a Supreme Court brief referenced in 2020 by Justice Elena Kagan.

This record is almost unheard of for a scholar not associated with a "prestige" institution like Harvard or Yale. Moreover, the record has been achieved exclusively since Rob "fled" academia to come to II full time in 2010. Before that time, the law school at which he was a professor did little to support his work and, because of Rob's conservative and constitutional views, sometimes even put obstacles in the way.

II's Constitutional Studies center is focusing on ways to bring "the supreme Law of the Land" to a larger audience. Here are some of the steps we're taking:



Rob is converting many of his articles to audio format. That way, people will be able to keep busy at household tasks and learn about our founding document—as well as learning how it has been distorted and what to do about it. Among the new audio files is the entirety of Rob's popular "Defending the Constitution" series and his "How the Supreme Court Re-Wrote the Constitution" series.

A new series of interviews with Rob has been launched on our **YouTube channel**, also covering the Supreme Court.



Constitutional Comments, a new podcast, has been launched. It features Rob sharing his article series, "The Founders of the Constitution."



Every year in mid-September, Grand Lake, Colorado holds the nation's first **Constitution Week** celebration. Rob will be on the roster of speakers, as he has almost every year since the event began in 2012.

Rob's analysis of constitutional issues is published in a variety of outlets, including the **Epoch Times** newspaper, the **Federalist Society** blog and, on occasion, in **Townhall.com**. But you can read all of his writings shortly after they are published at the Constitutional Studies page of our website.



Rob Natelson

Rob Natelson practiced law for over a decade and served as a law professor for 25 years. He is II's Senior Fellow in Constitutional Jurisprudence, and has been affiliated with II since 1994.

Independence Institute's Long-Time Support of Charter Schools

By Pam Benigno

Independence Institute laid the foundation for charter schools in 1988 under then president John Andrews. The small but mighty think tank brought Democrats and Republicans together with national experts to discuss how children would be better served by creating new autonomous public schools.

II vice president David D'Evelyn helped to build a coalition of charter school supporters. He helped then-Senator Bill Owens with talking points and co-authored an issue paper about charter schools to educate legislators. Tragically, David lost his life in a small plane crash just days before the historic signing of the Charter School Act.

With the establishment of charter schools in 1993 and open enrollment across school district boundaries in 1994, II's new president Tom Tancredo boldly released the nation's first school report cards to encourage parents to study a school's student performance.

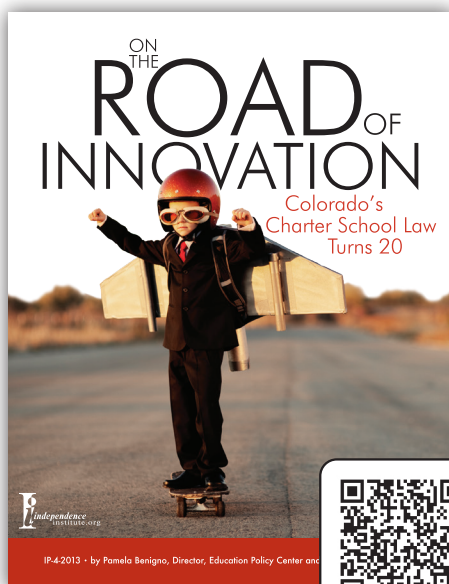
In 2011, I began detective work to unlock the mystery of how Colorado became the third state in the nation to pass a charter school law. For background, I listened to all the reel-to-reel tapes of numerous and lengthy legislative proceedings housed in the state archives building, spent hours in the legislative library, mined historic Independence Institute file folders, collected newspaper articles, and interviewed about 20 people. Prime sponsors of the bill, Republican Governor Owens (in 1993, Senator Owens) and the late Democrat Representative Peggy Kerns shared their knowledge and legislative files with me. Former Democrat Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien, key to gaining her party's support, told her story as then-president of the Children's Campaign.

An incredible chronicle unfolded, filled with backbone, political smarts, tragedy, and finally triumph. My former intern, Kyle Morin, assisted me in writing the story that was released in time for the 20th anniversary of the charter school law. (Kyle is now the principal of a charter school.)

As the teacher unions have mounted substantial attacks on the charter school movement, we have countered their attacks by writing four magazine-style publications filled with colorful photos of smiling children, their teachers, and founding parents and community members. Education Senior Fellow Ross Izard has written publications about the challenges of opening a charter school and how school authorization should be expanded. These publications help both the public and policymakers understand how charter schools serve public school children in ways that meet their educational needs and how in most cases they exist because of visionary parents and community members who have sacrificed their time and resources.

Independence Institute is committed to supporting charter schools and their expansion through our media outlets, op-eds, publications, and team members serving on boards and committees. Public schools freed from bureaucracy and from self-serving unions are more likely to be successful in educating Colorado's children and supporting the local community's values.

Read about how Independence Institute was key to the passage of Colorado's charter school law and about others who also believed autonomous public schools would benefit Colorado's students.



Pam Benigno

Pamela Benigno is Director of the Education Policy Center. A tireless advocate for both public and private school choice, she works with education organizations, policymakers, and community leaders to expand school choice opportunities.



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-2023- ALCOHOL TOBACCO & FIREARMS PARTY

It's Almost ATF Time Again!

Join us at our ATF party—the most politically incorrect event of the year—as we drink, shoot, and smoke and celebrate the rights our Founding Fathers secured for us. Our 21st annual ATF party boasts some great auction items, and a keynote speaker dedicated to helping you keep more of your hard earned cash, **Grover Norquist** from Americans for Tax Reform!

With the legislature's voracious assault on our freedoms this past session, our annual ATF celebration means more this year than ever before. Attending our ATF party ensures that we can keep fighting for liberty in Colorado, and halt further assaults on our freedoms in the next legislative session.

Please join us on September 16th from 7:30am – 2pm at Kiowa Creek Sporting Club in Bennett Colorado (46700 E. County Road 30, Bennett, CO 80102). Learn more and register at www.i2i.org/atf or contact Harry Paul at Harry@i2i.org.



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