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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**November 13, 2013**

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**Center Spreads the Word, Amendment 66 Goes Down**

The results of last week’s elections have shaken up Colorado’s education landscape. Few foresaw the landslide defeat of [Amendment 66](http://education.i2i.org/k-12-issues/finance/amendment-66-and-sb-213/), the billion-dollar tax increase tied to proposed changes in the School Finance Act. The Education Policy Center provided much of the intellectual ammunition that helped Coloradans understand the approach to be [unfair and light on real reform](http://education.i2i.org/2013/08/amendment-66-unfair-and-overpriced/). (Though as our young blogger demonstrated below, there were many angles to take in discussing the challenging weaknesses of the proposal.)

The issue presented numerous opportunities to communicate through the media, including Center director Pam Benigno telling 9 News viewers that [Colorado needs to raise expectations, not taxes](http://www.9news.com/rss/story.aspx?storyid=361863). But senior policy analyst Ben DeGrow provided most of the commentary, including national coverage by the [Associated Press](http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2013-11-05/colorado-mulls-major-schools-funding-change), [*Education Week*](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2013/10/colorados_swing_county_could_decide_fate_of_amendment_66s_k-12_tax_hike.html), and [*Governing* magazine](http://www.governing.com/news/headlines/gov-colorados-billion-dollar-plan-to-fix-education.html), a [debut on Grand Junction TV news](http://www.nbc11news.com/home/headlines/Amendment-66-mpact-on-rural-school-districts-228101621.html), and a joint appearance with senator Michael Johnston [on Colorado Public Radio](http://www.cpr.org/#load_article|Inside_Amendment_66) (Johnston also [debated Jon Caldara on 9 News](http://www.9news.com/rss/article/361526/222/Is-amendment-66-the-right-fix-for-schools)). Ben rounded it all up in a [November 8 column for *Human Events*](http://www.humanevents.com/2013/11/08/colorados-income-tax-battle-explained/).

More from Ed Is Watching:

## [Building on Colorado Evaluation Reform Doesn’t Need Billion-Dollar Tax Hike](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/11/building-on-colorado-evaluation-reform-doesnt-need-billion-dollar-tax-hike/)

## [Amendment 66 Hurts Colorado Economy, But “Where’s the Beef?” on Reform](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/amendment-66-hurts-colorado-economy-but-wheres-the-beef-on-reform/)

## [Many Rural Districts Like Four -Day School Week, No Reason for Amendment 66](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/11/many-rural-districts-like-four-day-school-week-no-reason-for-amendment-66/)

## [Greeley’s Pro-Amendment 66 Fliers Come Up Short on Eddie’s Truth Check](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/greeleys-pro-amendment-66-fliers-come-up-short-on-eddies-truth-check/)

## [Of Course, I Can’t Talk about Anything but the Amendment 66 Billion-Dollar Tax Hike](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/of-course-i-cant-talk-about-anything-but-the-amendment-66-billion-dollar-tax-hike/)

**Scholarship Tax Credits Offer Way Forward**

With the demise of 66, it’s time to look ahead to more fundamental education policy improvements. A number of good ideas abound. As Ben noted in his *Human Events* column: “A real pro-student, cost-saving education reform idea like scholarship tax credits, on the books in 13 other states, ought to be near the top of the agenda.” As interest in the idea grows, our [**Colorado Kids Win** website](http://coloradokidswin.org/) is the first stop to get informed and to get engaged. Also, don’t forget to “Like” the [Colorado Kids Win Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/ColoradoKidsWin). Pam is busy spreading the word about scholarship tax credits to groups all over Colorado. If you would like to be added to the list, please drop her a line.

**Union-Favored School Board Candidates Falter**

[Recapping the election results on last Wednesday’s Amy Oliver Show](http://education.i2i.org/2013/11/amy-oliver-show-amendment-66-goes-down-reformers-win-school-board-seats/), Ben noted that teachers union-backed candidates in Colorado’s three largest school districts went a combined 0-for-11. Denver summoned stronger support for the pro-charter superintendent’s reform agenda, while Douglas County voters rallied to continue the district’s [cutting-edge parental choice and educator performance initiatives](http://education.i2i.org/2013/09/douglas-county-building-a-better-education-model/). The biggest surprise was a clean sweep by three conservative reform candidates in Jefferson County, which [Ben discussed in a 9 News report](http://education.i2i.org/2013/11/degrow-comments-on-jeffco-school-board-change/). Pro-reform candidates gained many other board seats around Colorado, including in Loveland’s Thompson School District, where one very close race looks like it will shift power.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Teachers Union Leaders Miscalculate in Adams 12, Misbehave in DougCo](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/teachers-union-leaders-miscalculate-in-adams-12-misbehave-in-dougco/)

[Democrat Groff Backs Dougco Reform, as Vote Fraud Talk Enters Election Fray](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/democrat-groff-backs-dougco-reform-as-vote-fraud-talk-enters-election-fray/)

**CEA Political Refund Deadline Approaches**

Now that the election is over, the holiday season isn’t the only thing fast approaching. If you have any friends or loved ones in the Colorado Education Association, don’t forget to remind them that their opportunity to request back up to $63 in automatic political deductions ends on December 15. [Check out our Independent Teachers website](http://www.independentteachers.org/) to learn more about the CEA’s Every Member Option, available to members separately from both the state union and many local affiliates.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Give Teachers Real Membership Choices Minus the Shame and Inconvenience](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/give-teachers-real-membership-choices-minus-the-shame-and-inconvenience/)

**Raaki Covers 66, Eddie Peeks Around**

Amendment 66 was a very big issue, so it is not surprising that the Raaki Garcia Show covered the topic thoroughly in October. The popular Spanish-language radio program included separate interviews with both the Independence Institute’s [Ben DeGrow](http://raakigarcia.com/2013/10/10-22-2013-raaki-garcia-show/) and [Linda Gorman](http://raakigarcia.com/2013/10/10-31-2013/) about the billion-dollar tax increase.

Meanwhile, little blogger Eddie wasn’t entirely consumed with the burning issues of the moment. He went just a little bit off the beaten path to bring our attention to a few other important developments as well:

[There’s Something to Be Said for Flipping Not Just Classrooms, But Whole Schools](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/theres-something-to-be-said-for-flipping-not-just-classrooms-but-whole-schools/)

[Louisiana Choice Reduces Segregation: Why Is Justice Department Attacking It?](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/louisiana-choice-reduces-segregation-why-is-justice-department-attacking-it/)

[Weld County School Districts Stand Out on Safety, Fiscal Sanity, Sound Policy](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/weld-county-school-districts-stand-out-on-safety/)

[New NAEP Math and Reading Scores Leave Me Longing for More Reform](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/11/new-naep-math-and-reading-scores-leave-me-longing-for-more-reform/)

[Even This Post Might Be Too Much Attention on Common Core Debate](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/10/even-this-post-might-be-too-much-attention-on-common-core-debate/)

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