## What you should know about SOS/TABOR: CI-97

Rep. Scott Mendenhall, Sen. Joe Balyeat, and other Montana legislators are working to put a constitutional initiative on the Montana ballot. They call it "Stop OverSpending" (SOS) – CI-97.

The initiative is modeled after Colorado's so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (TABOR). It would impose a rigid formula in Montana's constitution to limit state government spending.

**National effort.** Montana is one of several states targeted for passage of SOS/TABOR initiatives by out-of-state groups such as the Illinois-based "Americans for Limited Government." This is a well-coordinated national effort.

**TABOR has been a failure**. Colorado is the only state with a TABOR; voters enacted it in 1992. TABOR has devastated economic growth, education, health care, and roads in Colorado. That's why <u>Coloradans voted to roll TABOR back</u> in Nov. 2005. The state's business leaders and Republican governor led the charge for a five-year TABOR time-out.

**This serves as a warning to Montana.** The only state that has had to live under TABOR just voted to suspend it. Why would we want to repeat Colorado's mistake?

## **Under Colorado's TABOR:**

- Roads and streets deteriorated to the point where 39% of the state's transportation infrastructure was in poor condition.
- Colorado went from the middle of the pack to the bottom of the barrel in funding for schools, higher education, child immunizations, health insurance for poor children, etc.
- Colorado had the 4th slowest job growth of its 8 Rocky Mountain neighbors.

**SOS doesn't fix anything.** Supporters claim Montana's SOS/CI-97 fixes the worst problems with Colorado's TABOR. But the TABOR **formula** is the main cause of Colorado's problems. The formula limits state spending to inflation + population growth. (Just ask Coloradans how well it works.) The same formula is in Montana's SOS proposal.

We already have a balanced budget requirement. Montana's constitution already requires that state spending must not exceed revenues. As Montana's Lt. Governor John Bohlinger said, SOS would replace that one-sentence requirement in our constitution with three pages of complex language that only a lawyer with a math degree could understand.

## We should ask ourselves:

- Do we want to hamstring health care services, especially for seniors?
- Do we want fire trucks and ambulances to take longer to respond to emergencies?
- Are we ready for our kids to face larger class sizes and less attention from teachers?
- Are we willing to risk driving on bad roads and bridges?
- Is it a good idea to endanger Montana's economy?
- Do we want higher property taxes? (TABOR/SOS shifts the burden of funding public services from state to local governments.)



TABOR was too extreme for Colorado.

SOS is too extreme for Montana. Don't Sink Our State!