

What you should know about **CI-97 (SOS)**

Clear & present danger. A small group of Montanans, backed by big out-of-state money, is pushing a dangerous ballot initiative called CI-97.

CI-97 (so-called “SOS”) is a constitutional amendment that would limit state spending to a rigid formula of inflation plus population growth.

It’s a formula for disaster. It doesn’t allow the state to keep up with the real cost of providing basic public services. CI-97 would lock this formula permanently into Montana’s constitution.

Rejected elsewhere. CI-97 is modeled after Colorado’s TABOR law. Twenty-two states have considered and rejected measures like CI-97 in recent years. Colorado remains the *only* state to pass such a measure. And in 2005, Coloradans voted to suspend their version of CI-97 because it was so damaging!

National effort. National groups such as Illinois-based Americans for Limited Government are spending millions to pass measures like CI-97 in Montana and elsewhere. These groups spent over \$274,000 paying out-of-state signature gatherers to get CI-97 on Montana’s November 2006 ballot.

These shadowy groups want to impose their will on Montana, but they refuse to reveal their funding sources. Why trust them?

A proven failure. Colorado’s version of CI-97, passed in 1992, caused a crisis in the state budget and basic public services. That’s why Colorado business leaders led the charge to suspend it. CI-97 is a failure in the only state that has ever tried it.

Under Colorado’s version of CI-97:

- Roads and highways deteriorated.
- Colorado fell from 24th to 50th in the nation in children receiving vaccinations.
- Towns had to freeze firefighter hirings, despite rapid population growth.
- Funding for the Colorado Dept. of Agriculture was cut by nearly 50%.
- Senior citizen services, public schools, and higher education all saw severe cuts.
- Standard & Poor’s put Colorado under a “negative credit watch.”

CI-97 fixes nothing. Supporters claim that CI-97 fixes the problems with Colorado’s TABOR. But CI-97 still has all the key elements of Colorado’s TABOR, including the inflation + population formula.

We already have a balanced budget requirement. It’s right in Montana’s constitution: Article VIII, Section 9. CI-97 would replace that one-sentence requirement with three pages of complex language.

We should ask ourselves: Do we want to make the same mistake as Colorado? If passed, CI-97 threatens to:

- Slash funding for Montana hospitals, schools, firefighting, senior services, and roads.
- Cut police budgets for fighting meth and force early release of prisoners.
- Force officials to raise fees and local property taxes to save vital public services.
- Invite frivolous lawsuits by allowing anyone, in Montana or out of state, to sue over compliance.

CI-97 (SOS) is an out-of-state gimmick that will hurt Montana families.

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