



# Trendlines

A brief survey of ballot initiative activity around the country

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## Political Analysis

The national economic downturn has hit states across the country hard with lost revenue and massive budget cuts. As a result of falling revenues, budget deficits are preventing states from investing in priorities such as job creation, education, health care, roads and bridges, and police and fire protection. Anti-government conservatives see the bleak budget picture as an opportunity to ratchet down even harder as states look to find the revenue necessary to protect priorities, create jobs, and get their economies moving again. Consequently, rigid revenue and spending caps or TABOR measures will be on the November ballot in Maine and Washington this year.

Similar initiatives have been defeated at the ballot in Maine, Nebraska, Oregon and most recently California—and they failed to make the ballot in Ohio, Missouri, Oklahoma, Montana, and Michigan. Between 2005 and 2009, TABOR was introduced legislatively in 28 states. [Colorado remains the only state to have adopted this terrible idea.](#)

A growing body of evidence shows that Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, contributed to a significant decline in the state's public services and business environment. Services had deteriorated to such an extent that Colorado voters chose to suspend TABOR for five years for fiscal years 2006 through 2010, in part to restore some of the service cuts induced by TABOR. Colorado voters also permanently repealed the "ratchet" feature of their TABOR.

TABOR and other regressive tax measures are also being considered and debated in several state legislatures as possible referrals to the 2010 ballot. They could also be put on the 2010 ballot through initiative campaigns in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, and Washington, but it's still very early in the process for qualification on the ballot.

## Maine's TABOR: Making tough times tougher

TABOR was rejected by Mainers the first time it was on the ballot in 2006 because it was a bad idea pushed by out of state special interests. Now they're back with the same bad idea that's already been proven a failure in other states. Secret, out of state funders have funneled money to the conservative group Maine Leads, which [faced an ethics investigation](#) and as a result, is now [required to disclose its donors](#).

The [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#) has produced [a report that shows the serious implications for the residents of Maine, if TABOR II is passed](#).

Opponents of TABOR II in Maine have begun running TV ads. To view these ads, [click here](#).

Here are more reasons why TABOR II is wrong for Maine when people are struggling:

**TABOR II is the same bad idea voters already rejected.** Maine voters rejected TABOR in 2006 and a TABOR-like proposal in 2004 because they were flawed ideas that would have hurt Maine schools, families, and local communities. Now TABOR is back, but it's the same bad idea that many other states have rejected and Colorado passed, but with harmful consequences. TABOR has been so detrimental to Colorado schools, health care and the economy to the extent that Colorado voted to suspend it. Maine can't afford to make Colorado's same mistake.

**TABOR was a bad idea before...and it's a worse idea now in the middle of a recession.** In the middle of the worst economic crisis in decades, TABOR makes even less sense today than the last time Maine voters rejected it. TABOR's rigid and arbitrary formula will lock in current cutbacks for years to come - and it will make it even harder to dig out of the current recession and create the jobs that Maine needs.

**TABOR II would undermine Maine's tradition of local control.** Mainers value the long-standing tradition of local control and town meetings. It is the way each community makes decisions to address its unique priorities and challenges. TABOR II would simply replace local decision-making with a complicated, one-size-fits-all formula that imposes the same cumbersome and expensive decision-making process on all Maine cities and towns. Voters in each community should be able to decide these issues for themselves.

**TABOR II will hurt Maine schools, families, and local communities.** The current recession has already led to \$27 million in cuts to Maine public schools and more cuts are coming this year. TABOR II will prevent the state from ever providing appropriate funding for public schools which will hurt Maine children’s chances for a quality education and a better future for Maine. Seniors could face cuts to important services like home health care and meal delivery programs. Vital public safety services could also face significant cuts. TABOR II would simply make tough times tougher for thousands of Maine citizens and communities.

### Washington: The Dangers of Tim Eyman’s TABOR campaign

The person responsible for pushing Washington’s [TABOR measure](#) is [Tim Eyman](#), a “professional initiative salesman” well known for promoting and profiting from initiatives since the late 1990s, starting his career by helping to pass [Ward Connerly’s](#) initiative to outlaw equal opportunity programs.

Like [Bill Sizemore](#) in Oregon, Eyman has attempted to put a stranglehold on state government by qualifying overly simplistic and “unnecessary” fiscal proposals and frivolous initiatives all meant to do nothing more than earn him a quick buck. Eyman has a history of scandal including cases of [profiteering off his ballot efforts](#).

According to an analysis of numbers provided by the Washington Secretary of State’s Office, signature gathering campaigns associated with Eyman have turned in more than half a million invalid signatures during his time as a fraud merchant in Washington.

I-1033 will actually make things [even worse](#) than they already are. Initiative 1033 would negatively impact the ability of the state, counties, and cities to fund public priorities such as education, economic security, health care, and community development. This would come at a time when Washington is struggling to recover from a severe recession.

[Initiative 1033](#) is a misleading initiative that will have thousands of unintended consequences — and it's an idea that's already been proven a failure in other states.

Opponents of TABOR in Washington have put out videos with residents of Colorado warning voters of the dangers of TABOR. To view these videos, [click here](#).

Here are additional reasons why I-1033 is wrong for Washington:

**I-1033 would slow economic recovery and leave WA in a permanent recession.** This year Washington faced a devastating budget deficit. Unfortunately, I-1033 would lock in this year's budget as the baseline. The worst of times in Washington would become the best that Washingtonians could hope for in the future.

**I-1033 threatens education and health care.** Unemployment is still on the rise, families are being kicked off health care, teachers across the state are being laid off, and nursing homes and hospitals are being forced to reduce their care. As the economy recovers, Washington could restore funding to these services - but under I-1033 the current situation would become permanent.

**I-1033 is a proven failure.** A similar initiative passed in Colorado in 1992. Since then, Colorado's economy has been devastated and funding for services ranging from education, to the judicial system, to health care, and libraries have plummeted. The situation was so critical that in 2005 voters put the law on hold so their state could recover.

### **Oregon: Making Corporations Pay Their Fair Share**

In Oregon there will be a January referendum on a tax fairness reform plan passed by the legislature that protected 97.5% of taxpayers. Voting *Yes* on the tax fairness measures (66 and 67) will protect vital services and make sure that middle-class families are protected from carrying an even larger share of the tax burden in these difficult times.

Some large corporations and high-paid lobbyists are working to overturn these legislative reforms. Voting *No* on measures 66 and 67 will result in a tax cut for corporations and wealthy individuals at the expense of vital services like education, health care, and public safety.

[The plan](#) increases the \$10 corporate minimum income tax for the first time since 1931, increases the marginal tax rate on corporate profits above \$250,000 by 1.3% (above \$10 million in 2013), and increases the marginal tax rate on personal income above \$250,000 for couples by 1.8%.

These reforms protect nearly \$1 billion in vital services like education, health care, and public safety. These funds preserve class sizes, save jobs for teachers, provide seniors with in-home care, and provide health care for thousands of Oregonians through the Oregon Health Plan. In this time of economic crisis, we must protect those who have been hit the hardest—seniors, children and the unemployed—without putting more of a burden on the middle class.

News reports have detailed that more than half of the signature gatherers working for the right-wing backed ballot initiative group to repeal taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals have [criminal convictions including for forgery, theft, and stalking or sex offences.](#) [Additional reports have also revealed](#) [News reports have also revealed](#) that “two of the petitioners had been convicted of sex crimes, including one convicted of the sex abuse of his daughter in 1990.” In total, background checks confirm at least 82 arrests and 37 criminal convictions associated with the right-wing campaign’s signature gatherers. The [petition drive to place the measure on the January 2010 is being led by Russ Walker and Kevin Mannix,](#) who both have a cozy history with “racketeer” [Bill Sizemore.](#)