



2021 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

Forward momentum

The Colorado General Assembly gaveled in for its first day on January 13, 2021, and promptly took a recess for five weeks. When they returned, lawmakers convened for one of the most consequential sessions in years, passing policies related to workers' rights, financial empowerment, housing, immigration, tax policy, and environmental protection.

We took action on fifteen priority bills this year. The overall goal of our advocacy agenda remained constant: seeking bipartisan and non-partisan solutions to meet the needs of our neighbors experiencing poverty and hunger. We are excited to see that twelve of our bills passed this year. This writeup offers a summary of the legislation for which we advocated in the 2021 session. Every step of the way, your voice and your advocacy mattered!

Tax Policy

Perhaps the biggest changes to Colorado's tax policy in decades, **House Bills 1311 and 1312** (Reps. Weissman & Sirota) will close certain tax loopholes that benefit large corporations and wealthy individuals. The savings will produce net revenue and will expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit and fund the Child Tax Credit for the first time. We are thrilled to have participated in this enormous anti-poverty effort and excited to see its impact.

Civic Reform & Criminal Justice

Last year, we supported an effort to provide multilingual ballots across Colorado. That effort was scrapped because of the pandemic but reintroduced this year as **House Bill 1011** (Rep. Caraveo), which passed. The bill will ensure that more people will be able to access ballot



Bills we supported

Total: 15

Passed: 12

Did Not Pass: 3

State revenue increased

\$244 million net over two years from closing certain corporate tax loopholes

\$110 million net over three years from changing state tax deduction limits

State funds leveraged

\$482,000 for enforcement of agricultural workers' rights protections

\$388,000 to provide record sealing services for certain low-level offenses

\$280,000 to create the Office of Financial Empowerment

\$100,000 for immigration legal defense fund

\$83,000 for multilingual ballot access services

Figures are for fiscal year 2022 except when noted

materials in their native language.

We also supported **House Bill 1214** (Rep. Weissman) to provide pathways to seal certain records of low-level criminal offenses. This will aid people seeking to get back on their feet and secure jobs and housing. A separate effort to end cash bail for many low-level offenses was attempted via **Senate Bills 62** and later **273** (Sen. Lee), but was stymied by a divided response from state district attorneys.

Housing Access

We supported the success of a number of housing bills this year. **Senate Bill 173** (Sens. Gonzales & Moreno) to balance the rights of tenants and landlords in lease agreements, limiting late fees and banning evictions based solely on failure to pay late fees, among other things. **House Bill 1121** (Reps. Jackson & Jodeh) prevents rent increases more than once in a 12-month period and prevents sudden increases for short-term leasers without a written agreement.

House Bill 1117 (Reps. Lontine & Gonzalez-Cutierrez) is a response to the 2000 Telluride decision by the Colorado Supreme Court, and will now allow local governments to promote affordable housing through financial incentives from builders.

Hunger & Food Systems

We supported **Senate Bill 87** (Sen. Danielson), a landmark policy change for agricultural workers in Colorado, who had too long been exempted from labor regulations like overtime, minimum wage, rest breaks and the right to organize. The state has nearly 40,000 workers that will benefit from this change. Because we believe in a just world where all are fed, we believe the rights of the workers who tend and harvest our food should be protected.

Immigration

House Bill 1194 (Reps. Tipper & Ricks) will create an immigration legal defense cash fund,

which can make grants to organizations that represent indigent persons in immigration court. As a sanctuary denomination, our calling is to leverage all the supports available to help our neighbors in need.

Economic Security

We supported the Proposition 111 to ban payday loans in Colorado back in 2018. As a follow up to that campaign, we supported the passage of **Senate Bill 148** (Sen. Gonzales) to create a state Office of Financial Empowerment. The office will aid people who have lacked access to stable, traditional credit and banking services and will connect people with tools and resources to avoid the trap of predatory lending.

Anti-Discrimination

Insurers have begun to use algorithms and predictive data models to determine risk and policy worthiness, but the public knows very little about what assumptions are being used in these algorithms. **Senate Bill 169** (Sen. Buckner) will aid the state in ensuring that such models do not unfairly discriminate against people on the basis of protected class status, including race, religion, gender and more.

Environment

House Bill 1162 (Reps. Valdez & Cutter) will mandate fees for the use of plastic take-out bags and ban styrofoam products across the state, helping reduce non-biodegradable consumer waste by a huge margin.

One bill that didn't make it across the finish line was **Senate Bill 200** (Sens. Winter & Moreno). We supported this measure to address air pollution control, but the Governor was not supportive. Some of its provisions were incorporated later into House Bill 1266.

God of justice and mercy, help us to see your faithfulness in all the opportunities you give us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen!

Thank you for your support and for joining us in advocacy!