

# Poll finds growing economic fears, dimming views of elected officials

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Coloradans' opinions on the state's political leaders and on the economy have soured over the past six months according to a poll released Wednesday.

A clear majority of likely voters — 55% — predicted the economy would worsen over the next year, compared 46% who answered the same way in a similar survey also conducted for the Colorado Polling Institute in November.

Meanwhile, opinions of some of Colorado's top elected officials — Gov. Jared Polis and U.S. Sens. Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper, all Democrats — have grown only more unfavorable. And that fall largely has been driven by disenchanted Democrats.

"We've seen Democrats become quite frustrated with incumbent legislators and executives across the state and across the country," Kevin Ingham, principal of Democratic polling firm Aspect Strategic, said.

In a poll conducted around the same time last year for the Colorado Polling Institute, Polis sat at 51% of Coloradans holding a favorable opinion of him, to 40% unfavorable. In its November poll, he landed underweight by 1 percentage point. Now he's down a net 4 percentage points, with 44% favorable to 48% unfavorable.

Bennet and Hickenlooper saw similar slips, although neither landed in explicitly negative territory in this latest poll.

Bennet, who is running for governor this year to succeed the term-limited Polis, moved from 45% favorable in March 2025 to 40% favorable now, and from 31% unfavorable then to 39% unfavorable now. Hickenlooper, who is running for reelection, moved from 49% favorable a year ago, with 36% of voters holding an unfavorable view, to an even split of 43% for each view.

In each case, the difference between favorable and unfavorable now is approximately within the margin of error of the poll, which surveyed 613 likely voters statewide through online interviews March 20-25. Its margin of error is plus or minus 3.96 percentage points. It was released by the Colorado Polling Institute and conducted by a team of Democratic and Republican pollsters.

The increasingly unfavorable feelings toward the officials could have some ties to overall economic malaise, but other data points indicate that "maybe what we're seeing here is more general frustration among the Democratic base toward their party in the way they are resisting — or not — the Trump administration," Ingham said.

The poll did not offer a head-to-head question surveying support in the Democratic primary for governor between Bennet and Attorney General Phil Weiser, his chief rival.

But the poll found name recognition continues to plague Weiser. While he had overall higher favorability than the unfavorable feelings, at 26% to 23%, a majority of respondents, 51%, said they either hadn't heard of him or

no opinion of him. That is an improvement from six months ago, when 58% said they had no opinion of him had not heard of him.

For Bennet, 21% of respondents had either never heard of him or had no opinion.

### Views on economy dive as gas prices surge

Views of the state's economic future also have grown more sour amid general economic malaise nationally a rising prices.

Three-quarters of Colorado voters were extremely or very concerned about the availability of good-paying jobs in their communities. More than 90% considered the price of housing, health care, home and car insurance, food and utilities to be a problem.

The cost of gasoline is now considered a very big problem by 41% of Coloradans, up from 17% a year ago. - Now

Over the past year, the average price of regular unleaded gasoline has risen from \$3.10 a gallon to \$3.82, according to AAA. The price of diesel has risen from \$3.38 to \$5.14 per gallon. Prices spiked after the United States and Israel launched a war on Iran in late February, prompting Iran to choke off a key access point for the global oil supply.

In the aftermath, 55% of Coloradans predict the state economy will worsen in the next year, up from 46% who predicted the same way in November.

Lori Weigel, principal of the Republican polling firm New Bridge Strategies, a partner in the new poll, said economic worries split most heavily along educational lines — not partisan ones. Among Republicans, 48% of respondents felt the economy would worsen, while 51% of Democrats and 62% of unaffiliated voters felt the same way.

Meanwhile, the higher a person's education level, the more likely it was that they would think the economy would worsen, Weigel said. The poll found 36% of people with a high school diploma or less were sour on the economic prospects, rising to 52% among people with some college education and 62% for people with a college degree.

"There was a pretty direct relationship with education level for predicting the state's economy was going to get worse," Weigel said.

In a separate poll question, Weigel also found strong ongoing support for the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, the amendment to the state constitution that limits the growth of government and requires a vote of the people to raise taxes.

The poll asked a general question about support for TABOR, finding 62% viewed it favorably, compared with 37% who felt unfavorable about it. Republicans supported it at the highest level, 74%, while 63% of unaffiliated voters supported it. A plurality of Democrats, 48%, also supported the amendment.

Weigel warned that such support might bode ill for pushes to reform the state tax code at the ballot box this year.

One measure, which is being pursued through the legislature, would exempt state education spending from TABOR's spending growth cap, freeing up potentially billions of dollars for other state priorities; it still would need approval by voters in November to become law. A second proposal, being pursued as a ballot initiative, would create a graduated income tax in which high-income Coloradans would pay a higher income tax rate than low- and moderate-income Coloradans.

"I would say most people think about TABOR as the thing that gives them checks sometimes, or money back, then they think about being able to vote on tax increases," Weigel said.

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