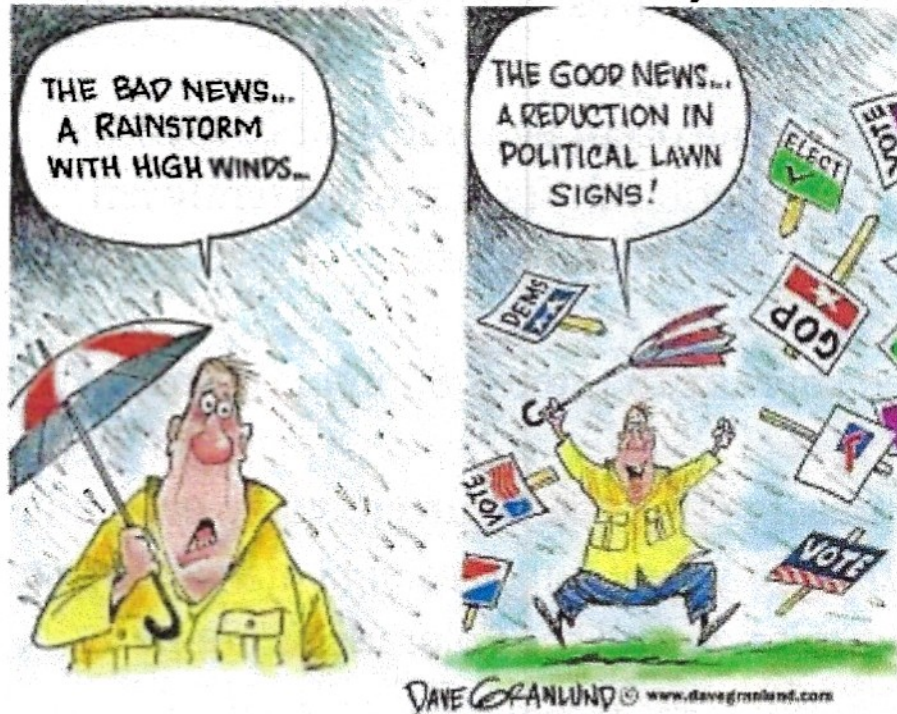


ENDORSEMENT: YES on 136 & 86 — two safeguards for Colorado

Both safeguards would provide the ounce of prevention that's worth a pound of cure.

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Coloradans have been caught in the crosshairs this year by attempts to raid their pocketbooks as well as to undermine their political independence. Neither attack has succeeded — so far — but the interests behind them aren't likely to take "no" for an answer.



Two proposals on Colorado's Nov. 3 mail ballot would protect Coloradans — in one case, as taxpayers, and in the other, as voters — against such attempts moving forward. The Gazette's editorial board urges a "yes" vote for Proposition 86 and Amendment 136.

Both safeguards would provide the ounce of prevention that's worth a pound of cure.

Proposition 86 represents a failsafe against a massive tax hike that appears on the same ballot this fall — Amendment 87 — and also against future attempts to subvert Colorado's current, simple and fair flat income tax.

The state's income tax now stands at 4.4%, and that's right where Proposition 86 would cap it. The tax rate could dip lower in the future if 86 passes, but not higher.

That's all 86 does — it's as straightforward as the flat tax it caps — in stark contrast to Amendment 87's \$2 billion-a-year tax hike. That measure would replace our flat tax with a dizzyingly complicated array of tax brackets. It would be like another federal income tax.

The extra brackets are an elaborate form of camouflage — a distraction intended ultimately to funnel billions of dollars more into state government coffers. It'll mean more play money for the legislature to create more programs.

Some individual taxpayers will pay a bit less under the scheme; some will pay a whole lot more, and most will get nothing out of Amendment 87 at all other than an extra migraine at tax time. But for the

taxpaying public as a whole, Amendment 87 amounts to an overall tax hike. The average rate will rise, by design, because it's actually a cash cow to be milked by the state.

Here's the clincher of why it's important to vote "yes" on Proposition 86's safeguard: Even if Amendment 87's tax hike is approved, Proposition 86's cap will prevail — and moot the amendment's tax-hiking provisions — so long as 86 passes by at least one more vote.

Amendment 136 would protect Colorado voters against rogue attempts to radically redraw the boundaries of our state's congressional districts to give one political party the upper hand.

Such gerrymandering undermines effective congressional representation for voters and would upend what is currently our state's well-balanced and fair attempt at taking politics out of the process, as required by Colorado voters. In 2018, they voted overwhelmingly to create an independent commission to redraw congressional and legislative maps. They also barred partisan politicians from carving districts for their political benefit. It worked. The state's eight congressional districts are represented by four Democrats and four Republicans, with one of those districts a tossup as to which party wins each election cycle.

That voter-approved measure ensured the nonpartisan process would occur every 10 years, when the Census is taken and congressional districts are reassessed for population shifts. It inadvertently left one loophole, though — for underhanded attempts to "redistrict" in between Census years. That's exactly what was attempted this year.

That immediate threat to our congressional map was stopped short by the state's Supreme Court in June, but only on a technicality.

Amendment 136 would plug the loophole for good. It would preserve the state's current voter-enacted system but add a check on mid-decade redistricting — requiring any new congressional district map to be approved by both the state's independent redistricting commission and the Colorado Supreme Court.

Proposition 86 does for taxpayers what 136 does for voters. "Yes" to both.