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# Bad press — and a bad brand — for Colorado

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A headline from this week's national news says it all: "Entrepreneurs flocked to Colorado. Now, red tape is driving some away." The article's opening lines make you wince:

"A vocal band of Colorado software engineers and venture capitalists are increasingly grumbling that their tech haven in the Rocky Mountains is devolving into the place of their nightmares: California. "During the 2010s, the stretch from Boulder to Colorado Springs, dubbed 'Silicon Mountain' for its concentration of founders, was minting a new startup every 72 hours. Now a collection of more than 300 business leaders say burdensome regulations are hindering growth — and that as a result, dozens of companies are skipping town."

The truth hurts. All the more so, considering the source: Sunday's Wall Street Journal. If there were any doubts among its readers — the nation's business elite — regarding our state's fading allure for new investment, there won't be now.

Where investors fear to tread, of course, jobs won't be created. And some job creators who already are vested in Colorado are leaving.

The Journal's article cites a recent report from the Colorado Chamber of Commerce on the exit of publicly traded companies from the state. The chamber report estimated Colorado has lost workers from about 98 firms to relocations or failed site-selection opportunities since 2019.

It certainly puts Colorado in the spotlight on the national stage, doesn't it? Marketing pros might spin it as "negative branding." Let's just call it what it is — a black eye.

And it's self-inflicted. Ruling Democrats in Colorado's increasingly business-hostile legislature have spent years slapping new mandates on employers, and saddling them with new levels of liability for whatever might ail an aggrieved plaintiff with a clever personal-injury lawyer. *Note*

Tech; oil and gas; transportation; restaurants and hospitality; homebuilding; agriculture; rental housing — name the economic sector, and our state's legislative majority has trampled on it.

Their fellow Democrat down on the first floor at the Capitol, Gov. Jared Polis, has presided over much of the anti-business mayhem.

Sure, Polis was a highly successful internet entrepreneur with a deft grasp on market economics before he entered politics. But in business, he only had to deal with rational investors and consumers — not the raging revolutionaries of the legislature.

The upshot? While Polis has been able to provide an effective restraint, at times, on legislative excesses — he's poised to veto a power grab by organized labor — he also has signed many business-busting bills into law.

On the heels of the Journal's sobering news report, the Common Sense Institute released an analysis Tuesday concluding that Colorado is "experiencing one of the highest rates of net business loss in the

nation, with significant implications for job growth, economic competitiveness and long-term prosperity."

Highlights from the Common Sense report include:

- Colorado ranked 48th in the nation for net new business establishments per capita in 2024.
- The state lost 3,934 net establishments, with closures outpacing business creation.
- Business turnover resulted in a net loss of 13,287 jobs — the worst, per-capita, in the country.

It all amounts to a wake-up call — by this point, more like a clanging fire alarm — for our state's elected policymakers.

Sure, it's old news that many members of the legislature's Democratic majority have no idea where capital comes from and never have created a single job (outside of government). Their economic obliviousness — coupled with an unrelenting impulse to "do something" to fix all of society's real and imagined flaws — inevitably will backfire.

But will it at last get their attention now that their policy failures are making national headlines?

"Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."

Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist