



Written by [David Kelly](#) on September 21, 2022

Report: Colo. Gov. Polis Defied Tax Reform Promises, Raising Taxes Instead

This week the Independence Institute's Fiscal Policy Center released a comprehensive [report](#) that confirms Colorado Governor Jared Polis greatly expanded special interest tax benefits during his first term, in direct violation of his 2018 campaign promise to cut them.

Governor Polis has gained national recognition for his politically libertarian and right-leaning ideas as a Democrat, especially on the issues of limited government and tax reform. The conservative American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) [named](#) him the fourth-best governor in the nation in 2021, in part for his positions on tax policy, stating, "Polis exemplifies the importance of placing pro-growth income tax policy over partisanship."



AP Images
Jared Polis

Both on the campaign trail in October 2018 and in 2019 after being elected, Polis told Coloradans that he would do two things: reduce the special interest tax benefits, especially those that benefit corporate interests, and use that revenue to lower taxes for all Coloradans, specifically income tax rates, making the reform "revenue neutral."

Polis continued to promote himself as being in favor of tax reform for Coloradans. In his 2020 State of the State [address](#), he said, "I am enthusiastic about working to deliver permanent income tax relief, and we should continue down the path of eliminating tax breaks for special interests so that we can lower rates for everyone without reducing state revenue."

But the truth of the matter is that Governor Polis lied, and this report clearly proves that his actual record is very different than his claims and promises. The [report](#), authored by the Independence Institute's Ben Murrey, concludes that Polis signed bills *increasing* special interest tax benefits by nearly \$640 million.

The report claims that it "accomplishes what no other report or state publication has. It parses out only those changes to law approved by Polis's gubernatorial signature that either increased or decreased tax expenditures. It evaluates each of those changes, determining whether each constitutes a policy change in pursuit of or in opposition to the governor's pledge to reduce special interest tax benefits. Then, using ten-year revenue impacts for each tax expenditure policy change, the report determines the cumulative net result of the governor's policies — whether they increased or decreased special interest tax benefits on net."

The report draws its conclusions based on data derived from official state sources. For example, it notes that of the 50 bills Polis signed changing so-called tax expenditures (i.e., "special interest tax benefits"),



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46 increased them and only four reduced them.

“The health of Colorado’s economy depends on our tax code being simple and fair,” Murrey added. “Muddling up the tax law with handouts to political allies not only makes the code more complicated for taxpayers, but it also damages the state’s economy by warping investment decisions.”

Here are key findings from the report:

- The 50 tax expenditure bills created, extended, or increased 55 tax benefits. They reduced or repealed only 23.
- All 50 bills that reduced or increased tax expenditures will cost the state more than \$300 million to administer.
- The increase in tax expenditures over the last four years is estimated to reduce Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR) refunds by \$211.6 million from FY20-21 through FY23-24.

The report concludes that Gov. Polis is no different than any other far-left radical that does not live by his “word” and can’t be trusted. “Polis personally took almost no decisive action to reduce income tax rates. He remained silent while his Democratic colleagues in the legislature killed five separate bills to reduce the income tax rate during his first term. When citizens put an income tax reduction on the ballot in 2020 with Proposition 116, he neither explicitly endorsed it nor opposed it.”

Silence is not a virtue, at least not in government.

Gov. Polis knows that his success on the campaign trail may be at risk as he seeks reelection in November. With the revelations in this report, Colorado’s horrible record on [crime](#), skyrocketing cost of living, growing homelessness, and other ills brought forth by Colorado’s Democrat-controlled government, Polis has much to overcome to keep his seat. Add the speculation that Polis is already planning to abandon his post as governor after he’s reelected (if he’s reelected) and run for president in 2024, and the electorate may just give him the boot.

With that said, to keep Colorado from becoming another leftist hellhole, the state needs and deserves a new governor and leader who can push back at the Democrat-controlled legislature and right the course toward liberty and freedom — as our Founders envisioned for all Americans.



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