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US NEWS

# IN-DEPTH: How Flipping Colorado Blue Has Become Democrats' Blueprint for the Rest of US



Members of the Communist Party USA and other anti-fascist groups burn an American flag on the steps of the Colorado state Capitol in Denver on Jan. 20, 2021. (Michael Ciaglo/Getty Images)

By Katie Spence

May 29, 2023 Updated: May 31, 2023

**A** Print

Colorado's legislative session is 120 days long, and lawmakers introduced 617 bills during the 2023 session. Of those, 218 passed and have been signed into law by Democrat Gov. Jared Polis. More are waiting to be signed.

Democrats have a historic majority in the Colorado House, a supermajority in the Senate, and control the governorship. As such, all of those bills passed with Democrat support—and more often than not, over Republicans' vehement objections. It's a marked change from 2002, when the GOP dominated politics in Colorado.

Republican state Rep. Stephanie Luck is one of a handful of Colorado representatives fighting back and trying to expose what she describes as Democrats' Marxist agenda, in which individual rights don't matter and the government controls every aspect of life.

"When I first got elected and sworn into office in 2021, Governor Polis gave his State of the State address shortly thereafter and stated that it was his goal and the goal of his Democratic majority to fundamentally transform Colorado," Luck told The Epoch Times.

"So, the question becomes, what was the initial foundation they want to transform? And I would point us to the mission statement of the United States, which is the Declaration of Independence.

"And basically, we could go word by word in that most famous phrase starting with 'We hold these truths.' We can start with the word 'We' and demonstrate how they want not a 'We,' not a unified whole, not one nation, but different tribes, different groupings, different identities, and then just go every single word and recognize that they really are advancing the opposite of that mission statement.

"And that is what Governor Polis and the Democrats have been doing in Colorado."



“The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776,” circa 1792, by John Trumbull. (Public Domain)

## The Blueprint

Luck refers to the book “The Blueprint: How the Democrats Won Colorado (and Why Republicans Everywhere Should Care),” by Adam Schrager and Rob Witwer.

It details how, in the summer of 2004, progressive organizations and a group of multimillionaires—including Colorado’s now-governor Polis—devised a plan to elect a Democratic majority. The group called themselves the Roundtable.

“Everyone had a common goal and it wasn’t to win friends. It was to win elections. That was the measure by which they would succeed or fail,” Schrager writes. He adds that the group’s main avenues to flip Colorado blue were an extensive organization, a deep understanding of data, and, arguably the most effective, taking advantage of campaign finance reform laws.

Dr. Joshua Dunn, a professor of political science at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, agrees.

“There was a well-orchestrated Democratic plan to take control of the state. ... [The Roundtable] was smart,” he told The Epoch Times. “They were smarter than the Republicans. I think the Republicans will tell you that they were outsmarted by them. I don’t think there’s any doubt about it.

“They were well organized, disciplined, and they imposed discipline on people who wanted their support. They had requirements for people—particularly in local races if you wanted to get support from them—you had to go and knock on a certain number of doors.”

In addition to organization and discipline, Schrager notes that the group understood that swaying state politics could have an outsized effect on politics at the federal level.

By taking advantage in the early 2000s of tax-exempt 527 organizations, so named because they are organized under Section 527 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, the Roundtable raised \$3.6 million, while Republicans raised \$845,000.

“In hindsight, it’s remarkable how quickly members of the Roundtable adapted to the new campaign finance reality. While national political groups were beginning to use 527s ... in 2004, it was unusual for state-based organizations to understand these exotic organizations and complex rules that governed them—much less master them to the point that they could be used effectively.”

With a significant war chest for state-level elections established, the group targeted Republican politicians. And they did so through targeted ads, leaflets, boots on the ground, automated calls, and a unified message that a Democratic majority was better for Colorado.

Schrager quotes Polis as saying: “We really didn’t truly know how big this would become. Clearly, when we started, we had no idea. I didn’t know this would have great historical significance, nor did anybody there that we would transform Colorado.”

But transform the Colorado political landscape they did.





Colorado Gov. Jared Polis speaks in Highlands Ranch, Colo., on May 8, 2019. (Michael Ciaglo/Getty Images)

From 1978 to 2002, Republicans controlled both the state House and state Senate. But in 2006, Democrats took control of both chambers.

Then, the 2010 election was the nail in the coffin, according to Dunn, and it came down to candidate quality.

“This was an enormous lost opportunity for the Republican Party, and I think it’s very difficult to overstate the significance of that election or the decline of the Republican Party in Colorado,” he said.

“That was the Tea Party election. By all rights, the Republican Party should have won both the governor’s office and what’s now Senator Michael Bennett’s Senate seat in that election, but they made two catastrophic mistakes. They nominated a Tea Party candidate for governor who was so ill-prepared that Tom Tancredo ran as a third-party candidate.

“Then on the Senate side with Michael Bennett, again, Republicans should have won that, but they nominated Ken Buck, and he was not prepared for primetime in that race and made several significant mistakes, but he almost won.

“If the Republicans had another good option, they easily would have won that race. So, there you have two statewide elections that Republicans should have won easily, and it was money that they just left on the table.”

## A ‘Marxist’ Agenda

Colorado has since shifted to the left.

“We’ve obviously moved to the left. There’s no doubt because there’s been nothing to put the brakes on for [Democrats],” Dunn said.

“You saw that with this past legislative session. ... There were a lot of really controversial pieces of legislation. ... Even the stuff that didn’t make it through, the fact that it was being considered kind of tells you where they’re trying to go.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if Polis wouldn’t have minded Republicans controlling one house of the state Legislature just to limit the bills that made it to him where he had to make a difficult choice. Either support his own party, which would require him to sign some legislation that might undermine a general election campaign for president, or veto and anger his own caucus.”

Luck said that she sees the Democrats as pushing a Marxist agenda.

“Let’s just take the right to contract and the right to property,” she said. “These are alienable rights [meaning transferable] that our founders understood were necessary to a free people. So, the right to property is a derivative of our self.

“And unfortunately, many of my colleagues don’t understand that property is inherent to oneself. They see property and wealth building almost through a lens of evil. Those who have are somehow inherently bad because they ‘have.’

“So, what we have seen this last session is a pitting of employees against employers, tenants against landlords, any category of people that my colleagues think at some point have been oppressed or have been wronged, are now—through law—given extra rights and afforded extra protections that I believe are largely unjust.”

In the 2023 legislative session, Democrats passed Senate Bill 23-184, “Protections for Residential Tenants,” that, among other provisions, prohibits landlords from considering “certain information relating to a prospective tenant’s income or rental history.” That “information” includes income and credit scores. The new law also puts a cap on how much income a landlord can require to qualify a prospective tenant.



A statue of Karl Marx in Trier, Germany, on May 5, 2018. (Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images)

Democratic state Senator Faith Winter, the bill's sponsor, said in committee hearings: "My first job was working at a homeless shelter. ... I used to go from landlord to landlord, apartment complex to apartment complex, and talk about how these mostly single mothers would be fantastic community members. They'd be responsible. They'd pay their rent on time. And I heard 'No' over and over again because they didn't make three times the rent."

Winter called income requirements "discriminatory" because they bar people from qualifying for rent, and she said some landlords discriminate against housing vouchers, which the new law now prevents.

Luck disagreed. She said SB23-184, and bills like it that passed in prior sessions, are now making it too risky for landlords to rent property in Colorado, and, as a result, are selling their properties to large corporations.

"The only people who will be able to afford to offer rental properties, and afford to be landlords, will be larger corporations who have the means to absorb costs in different ways," Luck said.

"If you're a landlord, you want to be sure that whoever you're about to let into your property can pay the rent, right? They're a viable investment, so to speak, that you won't find yourself in eviction proceedings quickly after signing leases because you know they have the credit and the income to pay you. But now, that is seen as racist and discriminatory.

"I had a colleague argue from the podium that credit scores are our means to basically keep wealthy people wealthy because she didn't understand that credit scores are on a comparison basis. She doesn't understand that credit scores are built off of a person's individual behavior."

Democrats also passed Senate Bill 23-017, "Additional Uses Paid Sick Leave," which requires an employer to allow an employee to use sick leave for other issues—for example, dealing with the loss of electricity or heating at their house.



Democratic state Rep. Junie Joseph, a primary sponsor of the bill, said during committee: “We need Senate Bill 17 because personal illness is not the only reason an employee has to miss work through no fault of their own. A family member can require care if their school or place of work is closed due to events or occurrences like inclement weather or loss of power.”



A rental sign outside a property in Denver on Nov. 20, 2015. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

Luck responded by saying that, historically, sick leave covered absences when either an employee or immediate family member was ill.

“To my colleagues, that seems fair and reasonable because the employees need the means to take care of things in their lives. To an employer, though, and to somebody who’s trying to make sure—especially in this time of labor shortages—that their workplace is moving forward, to have to calculate into their sick leave time these other extraneous non-sick elements that would generally require you to take an annual leave or some other form of leave, is very problematic,” Luck said.

Another way Democrats push their Marxist agenda, according to Luck, is by removing the right to protect one’s life and liberty.

On April 23, Democrats passed Senate Bill 23-169, which increased the minimum age to purchase firearms to 21, with limited exceptions. A day later, Democrats passed Senate Bill 23-168, which repeals protections for firearms and ammunition manufacturers. Now, if someone is injured with a gun or ammunition, they can sue the manufacturer.

Democratic state Sen. Sonya Jaquez Lewis, SB23-168's sponsor, said during committee hearings: "It's time for us to be bold and courageous in our efforts to implement life-saving legislation. This Gun Violence Victims' Access to Justice bill will hold the gun industry accountable, just like every other business in Colorado, and finally give victims and their survivalists their rightful day in court."

Luck said she sees the Second Amendment right as a corollary to the right to life.

"You can't have the right to life and property and liberty if you can't defend that right. So being able to defend oneself through different tools—whether that's your fists, knife, or firearm, whatever it is—is important and essential, and that's being upended," she said.

"The right to property, to contract, to liberty, all of these things are being fundamentally transformed, and I think Colorado will just see worse and worse outcomes. And unfortunately, unless people change their way of thinking, they will double-down on their idea that the government has the solutions, and the government is the solution, and we'll just spiral."



Handguns and firearms are displayed during a statewide gun buyback event held by the office of the New York State Attorney General in the Brooklyn borough of New York on April 29, 2023. (Yuki Iwamura/AFP via Getty Images)

## Silencing Opposition

There's risk when one party has too much power, Dunn said.

"They can go too far," he said. "They don't have to fully think through the consequences of what they're trying to do. If you have some real competition, it forces some reflection on people in power and generates more deliberation.

"And that's particularly true as we've had more ideological sorting of the parties. Where it used to be, you'd actually have some conservative Democrats, some liberal Republicans, and so you'd have some actual deliberation within the parties themselves, but as they've become more ideologically pure, you get less of that."

In prior legislative sessions, Luck said there would always be a "handful" of bills that garnered controversy and provoked discussion and debate. But in 2023, Luck said, "many" bills fit into that category. And to get them all passed, Democrats took steps to silence the Republican minority.



Two rules allow legislators to limit debate—Rule 14 and Rule 16. Rule 14 allows the majority to limit debate on a bill to one hour, and Rule 16 allows the majority to move a bill to an immediate vote.

“Rule 14 hasn’t been used since the early 2000s, and it was only used once,” Luck said. “And I’m not aware of the last time Rule 16, limiting the third reading debate, was used ever. And yet this year, it was used repeatedly.

“And it was not lost on us that it was often used when we were making good arguments,” Luck said.



Attendees wave placards during a rally on the first anniversary of the passage of Colorado’s abortion law, the Reproductive Health Equity Act, outside the state Capitol in Denver on April 4, 2023. (David Zalubowski/AP Photo)

In addition to readily using Rules 14 and 16, Luck said Democrats also took steps to limit debate in committees by restricting the number of questions that legislators could ask and limiting the time the general public could speak and ask questions.

The limit per person for the general public in committee hearings used to be three minutes, Luck said. This year it was two minutes.

A limit was also imposed on the total amount of time given to any committee hearing earlier on in the session, Luck said.

“So even in February, there were contentious bills, and the chair of the committee would say: ‘We’re only going to dedicate an hour to each side. So, we’ll get through as many people as we can in an hour, and everybody else, sorry. You’re out of luck,’” she said.

“Then we also saw some themes that will prevent people from testifying in the future. On a particular bill, a woman got up and expressed an opinion that a representative was opposed to. And instead of just saying, ‘Thank you for your opinion,’ and moving on, the representative attacked this witness so much so that the witness ended up in tears.

“But another witness got up subsequently and chastised the committee for their treatment of the prior witness. And in response, the chair of the committee, instead of apologizing, or instead of saying, ‘We agree to disagree,’ or whatever way of just reducing the tension and acknowledging the situation, the committee chair had that second witness removed by the sergeant.”

## Transformation

In addition to passing legislation on property rights and employment in 2023, Democrats also aimed at parental rights. On May 5, Democrats passed House Bill [23-1003](#), which creates a school-based mental health screening for grades 6–12. It also allows children aged 12 and older to opt into the screening even if their parents opt them out.

On May 17, Democrats passed House Bill [23-1057](#), which requires all new construction by a state agency or department to include a non-gendered restroom or multi-stall non-gendered restroom on each building floor where restrooms are available.

On May 21, Polis signed two bills, Senate Bill [23-189](#) and Senate Bill [23-188](#). The bills require abortion—but not prenatal care—to be covered by insurance and allow Colorado doctors to engage in telemedicine and send abortion pills to patients in states such as Texas.





Colorado Gov. Jared Polis speaks before introducing Vice President Kamala Harris before a discussion on tackling climate change at a program in Arvada, Colo., on March 6, 2023. (Jason Connolly/AFP via Getty Images)

On Feb. 17, 2021, Polis spoke about coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic in his State of the State address: “We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to not just build back stronger than where we were before the pandemic, but fundamentally reimagine Colorado’s future.”

In his 2023 State of the State address, Polis said: “As I stand before you today, I’m recommitting myself and my administration to bold ideas that move Colorado forward. To take on our greatest challenges with determination, optimism, and the voices of all Coloradans. ... Colorado can help shape our country’s quest to become a more perfect union by setting the pace of progress, fighting for liberty, and delivering on our promises.”

Several Democrats in Colorado’s General Assembly didn’t respond by press time to requests by The Epoch Times for comment on Colorado and its future.

Polis didn’t respond by press time to requests by The Epoch Times for comment on his involvement in the Roundtable.

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