



Advancing a Colorado Constitutional Right to a Healthy Environment Will Advance the Health & Safety of Colorado Communities In Significant and Meaningful Ways

The Colorado Right to a Healthy Environment will be placed in Article II which is the Bill of Right Section of the state constitution. This Article II recognition and protection of environmental rights will provide a higher level of protection for the health and safety of our environment and communities.

The Colorado Right to a Healthy Environment amendment, when added to the state constitution, will:

Place the right to healthy water, air, soil, climate and ecosystems on par with other fundamental rights, including the rights to free speech and property rights. As a result, state and local officials will need to ensure they protect our right to a healthy environment when making decisions, including passing and implementing laws at the state and local level.

Ensure that local and state officials work to prevent environmental harm by making environmental rights protection an overarching priority for all government action. Environmental protection will be considered early in decision-making when projects, laws, or regulations are being developed, making it easier to avoid harm before it occurs.

Fill gaps in existing environmental laws and regulations. The amendment would provide a legal safeguard for securing water, air, soil, climate, and ecosystems protections. Too often, relevant laws are missing, outdated, or contain loopholes and fail to protect public health and the environment.

Strengthen environmental justice. All communities—regardless of race, income, or background -- will have the same right to a healthy environment and natural resources. Government will need to consider existing pollution and cumulative impacts before approving new projects and the added impacts they will have on these communities.

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Protect future generations. Government decision-makers will need to consider and address long-term environmental impacts, not just short-term effects. Government will be empowered to ensure the safety, security, health, and economic benefits a healthy environment provides.

Increase government accountability. Communities will have a constitutional foundation for raising environmental concerns and seeking court review if laws--as written, interpreted, or applied--violate environmental rights.

Support healthy economic growth. Clean air, safe water, and healthy ecosystems attract businesses and employees, support tourism and agriculture, and reduce costly impacts from pollution, illness, flooding, and environmental cleanup by preventing environmental harms rather than responding after harm is done.

Ensure government and business advance environmentally sustainable and protective projects and operations. This in turn will create healthy environments benefitting their operations and workers.

Ensure that environmental harm, when it does occur, is justified and minimized. If state and local leaders knowingly infringe on environmental rights, they must ensure such impacts serve a compelling state interest that benefits all Coloradans and that they minimized environmental harm.

Overall Impact - Adding environmental rights to Colorado's Bill of Rights will strengthen environmental protection, advance environmental justice, and promote healthy environments for all people and future generations. The focus of government will now include preventing environmental harms before they occur and ensuring communities have meaningful tools to hold the government accountable when environmental rights are violated. Legislators, regulators and communities will be able to rejoice in the fact that they have constitutional grounding upon which to advance positive and strengthened environmental protections.

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