

Survey Transcript

Colorado is one of the most wasteful states in the nation, recycling only 12 percent of its waste, which is well below the national average of 35 percent. Economists estimate that we literally bury recyclable materials worth \$265 million in Colorado landfills every year, including materials that have markets right here in Colorado. Recycling also creates jobs. In fact, recycling creates nine times as many jobs as landfilling does. We can do better. Now is the time for us to grow Colorado's Recycling Economy. We hope you, as a candidate will consider being a leader. Thank you for answering our candidate survey.

1. Traditionally, U.S. recycling businesses have relied on China to varying degrees to buy recyclable materials, including paper and plastics (Colorado also relies on international markets for most materials, although we do have in-state buyers for glass, metals and cardboard). Recently, China raised its standards such that most recyclers can no longer meet them. In effect, China has banned some recyclable material imports, creating turmoil in the global recycling market and recyclers are struggling with where to sell their materials. We believe this is an opportunity in disguise and could be a catalyst for expanding domestic markets and beefing up recycling infrastructure.

Some of the strategies used by others to attract new end markets for recycling to bring their operations to their states include:

- a. **Tax breaks for end market businesses such as exemptions for property taxes.**
- b. **Funding opportunities to end market businesses through grants and loans.**
- c. **Tools and research on recycling markets for businesses.**
- d. **One-on-one assistance to end market businesses.**

Which of these resources, or others, would you promote if elected to foster recycling and attract businesses to Colorado who could buy and remanufacture these materials?

2. Colorado has a shortage of in-state markets and related jobs as well as limited intermediate processing (all material recovery facilities for sorting and cleaning commingled recyclables are located on the Front Range, requiring rural collections to incur significant transportation costs). Therefore, the short-term economics of recycling can be higher than trash service when long-term benefits are not considered. To help remedy this, Colorado currently spends \$3.5 million annually to help boost recycling in the Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity (RREO) Grants, yet the state receives between \$8 million and \$14 million in requests each year. Other states, such as Michigan, are looking to dedicate up to \$15 million per year.

How would you propose to increase funding for recycling to help communities build infrastructure and to attract new businesses to come to Colorado?

3. The state currently requires state agencies to develop a recycling plan but has no requirements for real action. Other leading states require all agencies to recycle and compost at all public buildings (where services are available), use certified compost in landscaping and construction projects, and to recycle 50% or more of construction debris in state sponsored building projects.

Would you support requiring state agencies to:

- **Recycle and compost (where available) at all public buildings**
- **Use certified compost in landscaping and construction projects**
- **Recycle 50% or more of construction debris**

Do you have other ideas on how the state can lead by example?

4. More than half of the counties across the state lack basic recycling infrastructure to collect basic materials like metal, plastic and paper. Many residents along the Front Range—including those living in major cities such as Aurora, Lakewood, Arvada and Westminster—don't opt for curbside recycling because their haulers charge extra for the service.

Potential strategies the state can implement to drive local communities to expand recycling services include:

- **Funding for local waste diversion strategic plans**
- **Funding for recycling carts**
- **Providing technical assistance for planning, procurement of third-party collection, etc.**
- **Banning recyclable or compostable materials from the landfill**
- **Requiring communities to provide basic recycling services**

Which of these strategies, or others, would you support to incentivize local communities to take action?