2026 COLORADO GENERAL ELECTION REPORT

NOVEMBER 6, 2026

As seen across the country, the blue wave led to a monumental shift in Congressional control, as well as down ballot races in several states. Colorado was no different – it did not just lean blue on November 3; it tipped over. Phil Weiser won the governor's race by more than 25 points, as the race was called exactly one minute after polls closed, Democrats swept every statewide office, and the party could hold seven of the state's eight U.S. House seats as part of a national wave that returned both chambers of Congress to Democratic control. At the State Capitol, Democrats cleared the two-thirds mark in both chambers, leaving the 2027 session opening with a new governor, veto-proof majorities and a Democrat caucus that now has to prove it can stay unified.

Voters also handed the Legislature a major fiscal tool through the passage of Amendment 87's graduated income tax and Proposition NN, yet a projected $1.6 billion shortfall, a balanced-budget requirement, and a reshuffled Joint Budget Committee mean the money will not arrive as neatly as the mandate. Add in conservative wins on fentanyl, human trafficking, and trans youth in school sports and gender-affirming surgery measures, and the story is a sweeping mandate with real complications.

THE BLUE TSUNAMI TOP LINES

Democrats won Colorado decisively, and the 2027 session will open with a new governor, veto-proof legislative majorities, and a budget gap that the ballot did not immediately close, yet changes the budget landscape dramatically.

- **Governor:** Phil Weiser (D) won with about 61% of the vote. He will be sworn in on January 12 and is expected to make significant changes to the Polis budget proposal.
- **Legislature:** Democrats hold 24 of 35 Senate seats and, by our current count, 49 of 65 House seats. Two-thirds of each chamber (24 and 44) is enough to override a veto. Two House races remain very close.
- **Ballot:** Amendment 87 (graduated income tax) passed with about 51%, and Proposition NN (TABOR revenue cap increase for K-12) passed with about 55%.
- **Budget:** Governor Polis's November 2 proposal leaves a projected $1.6 billion FY 2027-28 shortfall unaddressed, and the state must still balance the budget.
- **Leadership:** House and Senate Democrats have elected new leaders. House JBC seats, appointed by the Speaker, are still to be announced. Senate Republican leadership elections have yet to occur.

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Democrats won control of both chambers of Congress, a broad rebuke of President Trump and congressional Republicans that arrived as a wave rather than a ripple.

- **House:** Democrats were projected to win at least 250 seats, with NBC News projecting 258, the party's largest House majority since 1993. They needed 218.
- **Senate:** Democrats flipped at least seven Republican-held seats, including Kansas, Iowa, Texas, Ohio, Maine, North Carolina and South Carolina, reaching the 51 seats needed for control. Chuck Schumer has said he expects to be Senate majority leader.

- **What drove it:** Voter concern over affordability and the economy, immigration enforcement, and foreign conflicts including Iran, Ukraine and Venezuela. Vice President Vance blamed the Iran war for GOP losses.
- **Limits on the new majority:** President Trump still holds the veto, and most legislation still needs 60 Senate votes.
- **Health policy angle:** Democrats are expected to press to restore enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies and reverse Medicaid cuts. Federal H.R. 1 costs are already shaping Colorado's budget (see State budget).

COLORADO RACES

Democrats swept all four statewide offices and could hold seven of Colorado's eight U.S. House seats, up from four, if Eileen Laubacher's lead in CD 4 holds.

Statewide offices

Office	Winner	Share	Runner-up
Governor	**Phil Weiser (D)**	60.9%	Victor Marx (R), 33.7%; Greg Lopez (unaffiliated) also ran
Attorney General	**Jena Griswold (D)**	58.5%	Michael Allen (R)
Secretary of State	**Amanda Gonzalez (D)**	59.8%	James Wiley (R)
State Treasurer	**Jeff Bridges (D)**	58.5%	Kevin Grantham (R), 39.1%

U.S. Senate and House

Race	Leader or winner	Share	Status
U.S. Senate	**John Hickenlooper (D)**	60.2%	Won over Mark Baisley (R), 35.6%
CD 1	**Melat Kiros (D)**	78.3%	Won; beat Rep. Diana DeGette in the June primary
CD 2	**Joe Neguse (D)**	74.9%	Won
CD 3	**Jeff Hurd (R)**	49.3%	Narrowly won over Dwayne Romero (D), 47.4%
CD 4	**Eileen Laubacher (D)**	48.8%	Leads Rep. Lauren Boebert (R), 47.9%; not called, and the Boebert campaign alleges unusual voting patterns
CD 5	**Jessica Killin (D)**	51.6%	Won; AP called it November 5, a flip from Rep. Jeff Crank (R)
CD 6	**Jason Crow (D)**	66.0%	Won
CD 7	**Brittany Pettersen (D)**	60.8%	Won
CD 8	**Manny Rutinel (D)**	55.5%	Won; flip from Rep. Gabe Evans (R)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Democrats cleared the two-thirds threshold in both chambers, giving them a veto-proof majority IF they vote as a block, which has been historically very rare.

Chamber	Before election	After election	Needed to override a veto
Senate (35)	23 D, 12 R	**24 D**, **11 R**	24
House (65)	43 D, 22 R	**49 D**, **16 R** *Two races remain very close*	44

Key Senate Races

Democratic Pickups from Republican Incumbents:

- SD 30 (South Douglas County) ***Kevin Leung*** over Sen. John Carson, 53.4% to 47.6%

Other Competitive Democratic Wins

- SD 3 (Pueblo) *Aaron Gutierrez* over Dana Charles, 54.35% to 45.65%

Key House Races

Democratic pickups from Republican incumbents:

- HD 19 (South Boulder and Weld counties), ***Jillaire McMillan*** over Rep. Dan Woog, 59.4% to 40.6%
- HD 50 (Greeley), ***Tommy Butler*** over Rep. Ryan Gonzalez, 60.2% to 39.9%

Other competitive Democratic wins:

- HD 16 (central El Paso County), ***Stephanie Vigil*** over Jill Haffley, 56.25% to 41.34%
- HD 43 (northwest Douglas County), ***Rep. Bob Marshall*** over Nate Marsh, 56.8% to 43.2%
- HD 51 (Loveland), ***Jacki Marsh*** over Amy Parks, 51.3% to 48.7%
- HD 15, ***Jeff Livingston*** over Pricella Tiegen, 48.8% to 47.6%.

Still close:

- HD 21, ***Michelle Tweed*** (D) leads Brenda Delgado Miller (R), 51.0% to 49.0%;
- HD 22, ***Rep. Ken DeGraaf*** (R) leads Michael Pierson (D), 50.4% to 49.6%. The

***49-16 count assumes both leads hold.*

CAUCUS LEADERSHIP

Democrats in both chambers have officially chosen their leadership. Interestingly, given the progressive wave on Tuesday, many were surprised that the Senate democrats largely elected some of their more moderate caucus members to serve in leadership positions, especially Senator Dylan Roberts as Majority Leader. In contrast, the 49 House Democrats went the other direction with a sweep of progressive wins throughout their leadership slate.

Senate Democrats

Position	Elected	Defeated
President	**Sen James Coleman**	
Majority Leader	**Sen Dylan Roberts**	Sen Mike Weissman
President Pro Tem	**Sen Kyle Mullica**	Sen Cathy Kipp
Assistant Majority Leader	**Sen Katie Wallace**	Sen Elect Monica Duran
Caucus Whip	**Sen Iman Jodeh**	
Caucus Chair	**Sen Janice Marchman**	
Joint Budget Committee (two seats)	**Sen Judy Amabile** **Sen Elect Emily Sirota**	Sen Matt Ball Sen Adrienne Benavidez

House Democrats

Position	Elected	Defeated
Speaker	**Rep. Jennifer Bacon**	Rep. Andrew Boesenecker
Majority Leader	**Rep. Javier Mabrey**	Rep. Meghan Lukens
Assistant Majority Leader	**Rep. Jenny Willford**	Rep. Junie Joseph
Caucus Whip	**Rep Martinez & Rep Carter**	Rep. Lori Goldstein
Caucus Chair	**Rep Clifford & Rep Jackson**	Rep. Cecelia Espenoza
Joint Budget Committee	***	

*** *JBC positions in the House are appointed by the Speaker rather than elected by the Caucus as they are in the Senate. Given Rep Sirota moved over to the Senate, one seat on the JBC is open for appointment. It is also possible that Rep Kyle Brown may take a position in Weiser's Cabinet which would open a second position on the JBC. If two seats open up, the political rumor mill suggests Rep. Garcia and Rep. Gilchrist are on a short list for appointments to the JBC.*

House Republicans

House Republicans reelected their leadership on November 6 and the result was to make no significant changes:

- **Rep. Jarvis Caldwell** continues in his role as Minority Leader
- **Rep. Ty Winter** as Assistant Minority Leader,
- **Rep. Carlos Barron** as Minority Whip
- **Rep. Anthony Hartsook** as Minority Caucus Chair.

Senate Republicans

Senate Republicans will hold their Leadership Elections on November 14th. Given some Senate Republican members may take positions outside the legislature in the coming months (with strong rumors of potential cabinet appointments for one or two of them), we expect a shake-up in Senate Republican leadership on the horizon. We will report back on that when we have results.

JBC Appointments

Position	Elected	Potential ***Speaker of the House appoints House Democratic Members to the JBC
JBC Chair (Senate Dem)	**Sen Judy Amabile**	
JBC Co-Chair (House Dem)		***Rep Kyle Brown*** *(current JBC member)*
Senate Democrat	**Sen Emily Sirota**	
House Democrat* **One House Dem vacancy is open currently due to Sirota moving to the senate, and another vacancy may open if Rep Brown takes a cabinet position*		*Rep Lorena Garcia*** *Rep Lindsay Gilchrist***
Senate Republican	**Sen Barbara Kirkmeyer**	
House Republican	**Rep Rick Taggart**	

***Neither of these appointments have been formally suggested or put forward, this is based on political rumor.*

STATEWIDE BALLOT MEASURES

Colorado voters weighed in on a total of 14 statewide ballot measures. Voters passed the two measures that matter most to the state budget, Amendment 87 and Proposition NN, and rejected the competing income tax cap, Proposition 136.

Measures that affect the budget

Measure	What it does	Result	Budget effect
Amendment 87: Graduated income tax	Replaces the 4.4% flat rate with six brackets from 3.7% to 8.4%, starting in 2027. Incomes of $500,000 or less pay 4.4% or less; the top rate applies above $1 million.	**PASSED,** about 51% (lead of roughly 71,000 votes as of November 6)	New revenue exempt from the TABOR limit. The Denver Gazette puts it at $2.7 billion more for state operations; other estimates run near $2 billion a year. Dollars are aimed at education, health care and early childhood.

Measure	What it does	Result	Budget effect
Proposition NN: K-12 funding and TABOR	Raises the revenue-retention limit so the state can keep money it would otherwise refund, going first to K-12 and childcare. Proponents believe there will be a 2% annual K-12 increase for 10 years.	PASSED, 55.4% to 44.6%	Allows up to $4.6 billion in additional spending and ends TABOR refunds for the foreseeable future.
Proposition 136: Income tax rate cap	Would have capped the rate at 4.4%, blocking Amendment 87's higher brackets.	FAILED, 47.3% to 52.7%	None. The conflict between 136 and 87 is moot since 136 did not pass.
Proposition 137: Sporting goods sales tax	Lets the state keep and spend part of that sales tax on conservation, wildfire mitigation and outdoor recreation.	PASSED, 51.6% to 48.4%	Small, dedicated revenue if it passes.
Ballot Issue 7A: Front Range Passenger Rail	Regional tax in 13 counties to build and run passenger rail.	PASSED, 55.2% to 44.8%	Local district tax, not the state general fund.

Other Measures

Measure	Result
Prop 132: Fentanyl penalties	PASSED, 52.7% to 47.3%
Prop 133: Human trafficking of a minor	PASSED, 61.8% to 38.2%
Prop 134: Sex-based school sports participation	PASSED, 52.4% to 47.6%
Prop 135: Surgeries on minors	PASSED 51.9% to 48.1%
Amendment 81: Law enforcement reporting to federal authorities	FAILED, 44.7% to 55.3%
Amendment 82: Right to natural gas	FAILED, 46.1% to 53.9%
Amendment 83: Right to hunt and fish	FAILED, 44.8% to 55.2%
Amendment 84: Mail ballot voter ID	FAILED, 36.6% to 63.4%
Amendment 85: Plain-language ballot questions	FAILED, 50.8% to 49.2% (short of 55%)
Amendment 86: Congressional redistricting	FAILED, 46.6% to 53.4%

STATE BUDGET IMPACTS

Colorado faces a projected $1.6 billion shortfall for FY 2027-28 and must pass a balanced budget in the 2027 session. Amendment 87 and Proposition NN change the revenue picture, but neither closes the gap immediately or cleanly, and a new governor and a new JBC will rewrite the Polis proposal. The expectation is continued legislative and executive office interest in reducing Medicaid costs so they don't continue to swallow a disproportionate amount of the state budget.

Where the budget stands

- **Polis proposal (November 2):** $51.2 billion in total funds, up $579 million from FY 2026-27, with $18.9 billion from the general fund, up $479 million. The proposal does not finalize the details for how to close the $1.6 billion shortfall in this fiscal year.
- **Medicaid:** Health Care Policy and Financing takes 38% of the general fund. Polis says Medicaid will grow 15% on current trends and proposes capping growth at 4.3%, which would still add $820 million in total funds ($250 million general fund). Polis would look for federal and other non-general-fund money to cover the difference.
- **Federal cost shift:** Under H.R. 1, Colorado must cover 50% of SNAP administrative costs starting October 1, 2027, about $100 million. Polis suggests a ballot referral to let the state keep Healthy School Meals for All revenue above its limit.
- **Other Polis ideas:** Privatizing Pinnacol Assurance for about $400 million (half to the general fund reserve, $100 million to childcare - a measure which has been repeatedly rejected by the JBC and state legislature) and ending the business personal property tax reimbursement to counties.
- **Process:** Polis presents to the JBC on November 12 and sends an updated proposal on January 2, 2027. Final decisions rest with the legislature and Governor-elect Weiser.

How Amendment 87 and Proposition NN complicate it

- **Timing:** Amendment 87's adjusted income brackets start in the 2027 tax year, so much of the new revenue may arrive after FY 2027-28 begins on July 1, 2027. The shortfall is a FY 2027-28 problem, and budget writers may not be able to count the full new revenue against it. Ultimately, there's money in the state's future, but it's not here today.
- **Strings attached:** Supporters aim the new money at education, health care, and childcare, and NN sends retained revenue to K-12 and childcare first. Dollars with a destination do not automatically relieve the general fund shortfall elsewhere.
- **Higher baseline:** With NN's K-12 growth commitment is a 2% annual increase, it raises the spending the legislature has to fund each year.
- **TABOR refunds:** NN ends refunds for the foreseeable future, which removes a lever the JBC has has turned to in tight years.
- **Balance requirement:** The legislature still must pass a balanced budget this session. With new revenue arriving late and partly earmarked, the choices in the meantime are the familiar ones: cuts, reserves, fund transfers and one-time fixes.
- **New decision-makers:** The Polis proposal was written before the election and before Weiser's win. We expect significant changes, and a new JBC membership will shape them.

GOVERNOR-ELECT WEISER TRANSITION

Governor-elect Phil Weiser takes office January 12. As of today, he has named his first Governor's Office hires and a seven-area transition team. The initial staff draws heavily from his Attorney General's Office.

First staff hires

Role	Name	Background
Chief of Staff	Natalie Hanlon Leh	Chief Deputy Attorney General; formerly partner in charge at WilmerHale and a practice group and office leader at Faegre Drinker's Denver office
Deputy Chief of Staff	Kurt Morrison	Deputy Attorney General for Intergovernmental Affairs; formerly director of legislative affairs for Governor Hickenlooper
Chief Legal Counsel	Lee Reichert	Deputy Attorney General for Regulatory and Revenue Law; formerly chief legal and government affairs officer at Molson Coors
Communications	Lawrence Pacheco	Communications officer in the Attorney General's Office; formerly communications director at the Department of Revenue and for former Rep. Mark Udall; title in the new office not stated in the Gazette report
Administrative Director	Anna Noschese	Weiser's executive assistant; formerly managing director of the Silicon Flatirons Center at CU Boulder

Transition team

Area	Co-leads	Agencies covered
Consumer services and regulation	Seth Levine and Kathy Nesbitt	Regulatory Agencies, Office of Information Technology, Revenue, Personnel and Administration
Economic growth, education and workforce	Matt Baca and Pat Meyers	Economic Development and International Trade, Higher Education, Labor and Employment, Early Childhood
Energy, natural resources and agriculture	Katherine Archuleta and Keirstin Beck	Public Health and Environment, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Colorado Energy Office
Health and human services	Bernie Buescher and Carrie Warren-Gully	Health Care Policy and Financing, Human Services, Division of Insurance
Local affairs and transportation	Amy Hansen and Wendell Pryor	Local Affairs, Transportation

Area	Co-leads	Agencies covered
Public safety, military and corrections	Terrance Carroll and Michael Dougherty	Public Safety, Military and Veterans Affairs, Corrections
Tribal affairs	Ernest House Jr.	Tribal affairs and the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs

Buescher is a former Secretary of State, Warren-Gully is an Arapahoe County Commissioner, Carroll is a former House Speaker, Dougherty is the 20th Judicial District Attorney, and House is a member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

LOOKING AHEAD

A change of administration and a new set of legislative leaders is also a chance to be heard early. Governor-elect Weiser is still building his team, the Joint Budget Committee will have fresh voices, and every caucus is organizing around priorities that are not yet set. That makes the weeks before the 2027 session the best time to share data, build relationships, and offer practical solutions on the challenges everyone agrees on: a tight budget, rising health care costs and the need to deliver results for Coloradans. We look forward to working with our clients, the incoming administration and members of both parties to turn this transition into progress, and we will keep you updated as the picture comes into focus.