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**To:** Scott Downes

**Subject:** CCLP's Policy Matters

February 2008

# CCLP's Policy Matters

Colorado Center on Law and Policy/Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute

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## Events

- Watch for more details on an upcoming Self-Sufficiency event on March 19, unveiling a new report and other self-sufficiency announcements.

### Health Care Commission Reports to Legislature

*Arenales testifies on behalf of Commission*

CCLP Health Program Director and 208 Commission Member Elisabeth Arenales joined three of her colleagues on the commission in presenting its report to the legislature at the end of January. In an unprecedented effort, the commission took a comprehensive approach to looking at health care in Colorado and recommending changes.

Commission Chair Bill Lindsay said, "Approximately 792,000 Coloradans lack health insurance; all of us grapple with ever increasing costs. These recommendations represent a bold, yet realistic, approach to providing high quality, affordable health care to all Coloradans - a roadmap to reform."

The final report is available [here](#).

And check out media coverage about the Commission [here](#).

Stay tuned here for more health care reform updates.

### State Earned Income Tax Credit: Update

*Advocates push forward to pass tax credit for lower-income working Coloradans*

CCLP, COFPI, dozens of advocacy groups, nonprofits, faith groups, and businesses turned out in force on National EITC Day on January 30th to support the restoration of a permanent state Earned Income Tax Credit.

Representative John Kefalas and co-sponsor Senator Betty Boyd led the charge at the statehouse. Terri McMaster from Lutheran Advocacy Ministry spoke to the moral imperative for tax fairness. And former EITC recipient LaTerrell Bradford gave a compelling talk about the

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positive impact that EITC had on her and her family's livelihood. Senate President Peter Groff has also signed on as a sponsor.

The bill would provide 259,000 lower-income working Coloradans with a tax credit and pump some \$52 million into the economy.

Grassroots advocacy efforts and statehouse negotiations are continuing in full to ensure that lower-income working Coloradans get a fair shake and a fighting chance of lifting themselves out of poverty.

A Denver Post write-up about the press conference can be seen [here](#).

**For more information and the latest updates about restoring the state EITC, check back here.**

### **Federal Stimulus Package: How to lose \$109 million**

*Statehouse balks at decoupling, accepts revenue loss from stimulus plan*

As Colorado grapples with serious fiscal challenges related to health care, transportation, education, and so much more, it's clear that our state needs strong leadership and smart solutions. A perfect example of this dire need happened over the last two weeks.

Colorado will lose an estimated \$109 million in state revenue due to the federal economic stimulus plan that was signed into law, simply because our state tax code is linked, or "coupled," to the federal tax code. (This estimate is provided by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Colorado Legislative Council estimated the revenue loss at \$68 million)

In other words, federal legislation will cost Colorado buckets of money—at a time when our roads and bridges are crumbling, when our schools and universities are lagging behind, and when nearly 800,000 Coloradans don't have health insurance. All because our leaders chose to take no action.

The state legislature could have passed a bill temporarily "decoupling," or disconnecting, our tax code from the federal tax code. But since the economic stimulus plan passed Congress and was signed by the President, that quick fix is no longer an option, as the issue will now fall under TABOR rules.

This fix would not have increased taxes by one cent, it would not have increased spending by a single penny, and anyone who says otherwise is not telling it straight. Likewise, businesses would still have gotten the benefits from the federal economic stimulus plan.

It was a rare opportunity for state leaders to stop a problem before it occurred. But they did not do so.

## Colorado Confidential article on revenue loss

### Federal Budget Analysis

*Administration's seven-year legacy of fiscal neglect*

President Bush recently issued his Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal. Unfortunately, the Administration's proposal is more of the same: more debt, more deficit spending, more cuts to vital public services, more strain on states and local governments, and most importantly, more strain on ordinary Coloradans. For more detailed analysis, check out:

[Complete federal budget fact sheet](#)

### CCLP contributes to 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative

CCLP is proud to be a contributor to the 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative. The Initiative, which is comprised of more than forty organizations, strongly advocates for quality health care coverage for all children in Colorado. The group is firmly committed to achieving the goal of covering all kids a reality in the next three years.

All children deserve access to the quality and timely health care services that are essential for keeping them healthy and ready to learn. Health coverage also offers the most cost-effective way to prevent childhood illnesses from turning into life-long, chronic health burdens.

CCLP believes strongly that Colorado should move forward toward comprehensive health care reform, and the 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative can be an effective step toward that goal. Quality coverage and access to care are achievable and we must make this a priority. Covering kids is an important first success in the process of ensuring coverage and care for their parents and all other Coloradans.

For more information about the 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative, please contact Gretchen Hammer, Initiative Coordinator at [ghammer@publicleader.org](mailto:ghammer@publicleader.org).

## Promotions

## CCLP in the Media

In recent weeks, CCLP and COFPI staffers have been making the rounds in the press.

Carol Hedges was a featured guest on The Jay Marvin Show on AM 760 Progressive Talk on February 11th. She discussed the decoupling issue and how Colorado will lose state revenue due to federal economic stimulus package.

Kathy White did an interview on the president's 2009 federal budget proposal with the Public News Service (PNS), which distributes stories to dozens of radio stations around Colorado.

Also, Adela Flores-Brennan talked with PNS about the legislative push to restore the state Earned Income Tax Credit.

Scott Downes spoke with the KGNU Morning Show on two occasions to comment on the president's State of the Union Address and his 2009 budget proposal.

And Ed Kahn has participated in community forums and done numerous interviews on the proposed sale of two Denver-area hospitals that may limit health care access with media outlets, including the Rocky Mountain News and KGNU Public Radio.

[Click here to read and hear interviews and stories.](#)

## Grant Announcements

The Women's Foundation of Colorado awarded a \$10,000 grant to COFPI this month to further support its work in advocating to restore the state Earned Income Tax Credit.

The entire CCLP and COFPI team is deeply appreciative and thanks of these tremendous organizations for their continued support!

## 2008 Budget Primer

Wondering what really goes into the state budget? Curious about how the budget process actually works? Questions about what the state's spending priorities really are? Then check out COFPI's 2008 Budget Primer

## 2008 Budget Primer

## Updated Economic Self-Sufficiency Tables

The new 2008 Colorado Economic Self Sufficiency Standard Tables are now available on the Colorado Department of Local Affairs website. Click [here](#) to find out what it takes for your family to make ends meet in Colorado.

The Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income is needed for a family of a given composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic yet needs-without public or private assistance. The Colorado standard measures this for 70 different family types in each of Colorado's 64 counties. Full report coming in March 2008.

For more information about the tables and the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard, please contact Tracey Stewart at 303-573-5669 ext. 314 or [tstewart@cclponline.org](mailto:tstewart@cclponline.org).

## Self-Sufficiency Tables

Colorado Center on Law and Policy

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