

## **REPORT: STATE LAGS NATION IN SPENDING IN KEY AREAS**

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Colorado must spend billions more each year on education, transportation and health care just to reach the average per-capita allocations of other states in those areas, according to a report put out by a private organization this week.

The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute, which works toward financial policies that benefit especially low- and moderate-income populations, did not offer specific solutions on how to fix the problem. But the report, "Aiming for the Middle," declared that it is time for public discussion about the state's spending choices.

"Colorado is a wonderful and amazing place in so many ways, yet we continue to lag behind other states when it comes to investing in our future," senior fiscal policy analyst Carol Hedges said in a statement.

The report found that, among the 50 states, Colorado ranks:

- 49th in covering the uninsured and low-income families under Medicaid
- 39th in state highway spending per capita
- 48th in per-capita spending on higher education
- 34th in per-capita investment in public elementary and secondary schools.

To bring it up to average levels, the state would have to increase spending annually by \$1 billion on health care, \$139 million on highways, \$467 million on public colleges and universities and \$672.5 million on elementary and secondary schools, the report states.

Several Republican officials called the report another "tax and spend" request and noted that House Minority Leader Mike May recently warned of groups manufacturing crises in a constituent newsletter.

"After hearing the initial reports from some of the 'study groups' this summer, I can't help but be concerned that the answer at the end of the book with many of them will just be 'more money,'" May wrote earlier this month.