



COLORADO CENTER  
on LAW & POLICY

Justice and Economic Security for all Coloradans

## 2010 ECONOMIC SELF SUFFICIENCY LEGISLATIVE REVIEW May 19, 2010

# Lawmakers show removing barriers to economic opportunity is possible, even during a recession

Even while shackled by fiscal restraints and a failing economy, several members of Colorado's General Assembly did their best during the 2010 legislative session to act on the behalf of the people of Colorado. They considered the economic health of Colorado families and the effect of family financial stability on communities throughout the state. As a result, they passed several laws to mitigate barriers Colorado families face as they struggle to make ends meet.

Several bills were introduced through the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force and had the support of more than 60 stakeholder organizations including the Colorado Center on Law and Policy. Here's a review of the most significant measures during the 2010 session.

### *House Bill 10-1002*

**Sponsors:** Rep. Kefalas, Sen. Sandoval

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** Sets the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as the first method for refunds of excess revenue under the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. The bill has the potential to restore state EITC payments to low-income working families, thereby mitigating the effect of poverty by providing families with more cash in hand.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported the legislation because it supports family economic self-sufficiency and tax fairness.

### *House Bill 10-1017*

**Sponsors:** Rep. Kagan, Sen. Boyd

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** Increases the inventory of affordable housing units and creates the opportunity for low-income families to live in the same towns as they work. This legislation can also provide an increase of economic activity for cities and counties that support developers willing to build affordable housing units.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation because it encourages business and government to work together on behalf of low-income workers and their families.

*House Bill 10-1022*

**Sponsors:** Rep. Summers, Sen. Boyd

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Supports the Colorado Department of Human Services as it creates a state outreach plan for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The benefits of this program include the potential for assistance to elders and families who are struggling to eat and increased economic activity in local communities.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation because it is another step toward making our state compliant with federal law, has the potential for alleviating hunger for people living at poverty level and sustains retail grocery business throughout rural Colorado.

*House Bill 10-1023*

**Sponsors:** Rep. Waller, Sen. Hudak

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** An administrative “clean-up” bill that clarifies the limits of employer liability for actions of workers who are ex-felons and eliminates a barrier to employment for ex-felons seeking work.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this economic self-sufficiency legislation because it expands economic opportunity for employers seeking qualified workers who are choosing to break the cycle of incarceration, unemployment and poverty.

*House Bill 10-1035*

**Sponsors:** Reps. Massey and Solano, Sen. Steadman

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** Shifts eligibility rules for child care assistance to provide a qualifying families uninterrupted participation in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program for a year at a time.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this economic self-sufficiency legislation because it expands economic opportunity for low-income families that rely on the continuity of child care assistance as a requirement for full-time employment.

*Senate Bill 10-006*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Boyd, Rep. Summers

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Provides for no-cost copies of identification documents for families who need ID to access employment or public benefits.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this economic self-sufficiency legislation because it removes a systemic barrier to public assistance and employment.

*Senate Bill 10-007*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Hudak, Rep. Gagliardi

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Specifies that county social services departments may enter into memorandums of understanding with family resource centers, which are nonprofits that help coordinate public services.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation because it encourages collaboration among government and nonprofit agencies, and it acknowledges the complexities of helping families move toward economic self-sufficiency.

*Senate Bill 10-009*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Hudak, Rep. Gagliardi

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** An administrative “clean-up” bill that further clarifies the duties of the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force. This legislation creates opportunity for the committee to implement evaluation models for state programs and initiatives committed to reducing poverty in Colorado.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation and participated in the design of the poverty reduction/economic self-sufficiency evaluation model. The Colorado Center on Law and Policy is the lead agency of the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Metrics Subcommittee.

*Senate Bill 10-010*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Boyd, Rep. Kefalas

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** An administrative “clean-up” bill that promotes evaluation of programs and initiatives that use state Temporary Aid to Needy Families funds.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation as part of the Colorado Department of Human Services’ efforts to monitor the effectiveness of poverty-mitigation programs.

*Senate Bill 10-068*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Boyd, Rep. Massey

**Status:** Signed by governor

**Description:** An administrative “clean-up” bill that streamlines eligibility and participation in the Colorado Works public assistance program. Low-income families now qualify for basic cash assistance without fear of losing vital assets that are deemed necessary for work and livability.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported this legislation to promote the efforts of the Colorado Department of Human Services as it continues to face the challenge of implementing an equitable public assistance program for low-income families. CCLP, with other stakeholders, worked to craft the language of the bill to acknowledge and mitigate the unintended consequences of the “cliff effect” that occurs in public benefits delivery.

*Senate Bill 213*

**Sponsors:** Sen. Shaffer B., Rep. Weissmann

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Suspends legislative interim committees for one year. The committees, including the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force, recommend reforms to the legislature.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy opposed this bill because it eliminates the state’s first systematic effort to reduce poverty. CCLP has been a leader of the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force and hopes lawmakers will stay committed to the task force’s work this year, producing a strategic plan for reducing poverty.

*House Bill 1351*

**Sponsors:** Rep. Ferrandino, Sen. Romer

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Reduces the annual percentage interest rate by at least half on the majority of loans from payday lending companies.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supported the measure as a small first step toward limiting the financial damage families face from predatory lenders.

*Senate Bill 10-028*

**Sponsors:** Senator Heath; Rep. Pace

**Status:** Passed

**Description:** Permits employers to voluntarily establish workshare programs as an alternative to employee layoffs. Workshare programs help employers avoid layoffs by allowing them to reduce the overall work hours of all employees. The workers can then receive pro-rated unemployment insurance compensation benefits for the reduced work hours. The programs are voluntary, temporary, revenue-neutral to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and proven effective in 17 other states.

**Our position:** The Colorado Center on Law and Policy supports Senate Bill 10-28 because it helps employers retain jobs and avoid layoffs. Workshare programs are one more tool to help workers and employers weather the current recession and prepare for returning prosperity. They help employers preserve a skilled workforce and avoid costly turnover, boost employee morale and foster greater economic stability.