



COLORADO FISCAL  
POLICY INSTITUTE

# Colorado government making significant progress in accountability and transparency

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The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute is a project of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and advocacy organization seeking justice and economic security for all Coloradans.

**Colorado lawmakers took key steps this year to boost transparency and accountability, further enhancing the citizens' ability to understand how their tax money is being invested.**

Colorado is a nationally recognized leader in public transparency. Building on the state's commitment to accountable public spending, lawmakers took key steps this year to boost transparency and accountability, further enhancing the citizens' ability to understand how their tax money is being invested. Greater transparency and accountability builds trust in government to carry out the services people expect of it.

## **Enhancing accountability and transparency in Colorado**

The Colorado General Assembly and executive branch took several steps to improve accountability and transparency in government this year, including:

- Establishing a new budgeting process that aligns Colorado with the Eight Principles of Financial Transparency outlined by the Association of Government Accountants. The State Measurements for Accountable, Responsive and Transparent Government Act (SMART) will link spending to performance goals, further ensuring tax dollars are spent wisely.
- Requiring the Colorado Economic Development Commission to measure how well grants, loans, and tax credits are meeting their stated job-creation objectives.
- Creating a system for measuring teacher performance that rewards classroom accomplishments.
- Mandating that school districts post financial data online, including budgets and salary schedules.

## **Proven tools for accountability and transparency in Colorado**

Colorado has also launched three online tools that allow people to easily learn about the taxes they pay and the services they receive with that money.

- State Taxpayer Accountability Report (STAR) provides an easy-to-read snapshot of state finances, [www.colorado.gov/dpa/dfp/sco/STAR/star.htm](http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/dfp/sco/STAR/star.htm).
- Tax Tracks shows citizens how much they pay in taxes and where the money goes, [www.colorado.gov/taxtracks](http://www.colorado.gov/taxtracks).
- The Transparency Online Project (TOP) provides a clearinghouse of information about state revenue and spending. <http://tops.state.co.us>.

## **Praise for Colorado's success in accountability and transparency**

Several independent groups have recognized Colorado's efforts to improve accountability and transparency in recent years.

- Colorado ranks 4<sup>th</sup> among the states in reporting on spending under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, according to the

Colorado Public Interest Research Group and Colorado Common Cause.

- Colorado Controller David McDermott was honored by the National Association of State Comptrollers with the 2009 President's Award for his leadership and expertise in accounting and financial reporting.
- The Colorado Office of the State Auditor received the Excellence in Accountability award in 2007 from the National State Auditors Association.
- State Treasurer Cary Kennedy was honored this month by the Colorado Freedom of Information Council for posting more financial information online.