



Memo: Proposal for Ballot Solutions to Maximize Local Funding Consultant (RFP #26638) - Technical Proposal

Prepared By: Hilltop Public Solutions & CRL Associates

Prepared For: Jefferson County Public Schools

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal to provide consulting services to Jefferson County Schools to assist in identifying and evaluating ballot solutions that will enhance local funding for the school district. Hilltop Public Solutions and CRL Associates are teaming up on this proposal to leverage our collective experience and expertise. Working together we can provide unparalleled experience across the board - from stakeholder outreach and community engagement to planning and executing winning ballot measures. This proposal outlines our approach to this project. We look forward to discussing any potential questions you may have.

About Hilltop Public Solutions

Hilltop brings unparalleled experience in successfully managing strategic campaigns for various issues, candidates, and nonprofits, showcasing victories in diverse political environments. Our approach is uniquely tailored, with a commitment to personal attention and detail for each project. This proficiency extends to strategic planning, adhering to budgetary constraints, and ensuring flawless execution. Our expertise encompasses a broad spectrum of political activities and nonprofit management, including sophisticated strategies in both paid communications and earned media.

As a leading public affairs firm since 2006, Hilltop has been instrumental in advancing the goals of Fortune 500 companies, unions, candidates, nonprofits, and trade associations. Our widespread presence in major U.S. cities underlines our ability to handle high-profile presidential campaigns, senatorial elections, and large-scale issue advocacy movements. In Colorado, our efforts have been pivotal in managing successful Presidential and Senate races, statewide ballot measures, and impactful local races. Our role in the elections of significant Democrats in Colorado, including Senator Michael Bennet and Congressman Joe Neguse, highlights our influence and effectiveness.

Hilltop's team is composed of experienced managers, communicators, writers, and strategists who adopt an "all hands-on deck" approach, ensuring comprehensive client support. Beyond campaign work, we excel in nonprofit consulting, as exemplified by our leadership in environmental and climate justice initiatives through the Energy Foundation. Managing a multi-million dollar budget, we oversee a vast network of grantees and coalitions, leading significant regulatory changes in energy and environmental policies in Colorado. Our efforts have been instrumental in legislative advancements, transitioning utilities towards renewable energy, and closing down fossil fuel plants,

cementing Colorado's position as a leader in combating climate change. Our extensive background in various facets of public affairs makes us a robust and versatile choice for any strategic campaign or consulting need. To learn more about each Hilltop team member, please click on their individual bios at hilltoppublicsolutions.com

About CRL Associates

CRL Associates is a leading government relations, public affairs, and strategic communications firm in Denver, assisting clients achieve greater levels of success, shape public opinion and transform public policy since 1981. With decades of experience in the public sector, our team understands how to solve problems and identify opportunities for clients.

We blend strategic thinking and deep institutional knowledge of the public decision-making environment with effective community engagement to advise our clients and drive successful outcomes. Community is at the core of our work. Our team understands this and works with clients to build authentic community partnerships that are responsive to community needs and help develop community support.

CRL has considerable experience helping local governments and authorities assess the viability of various tax proposals, developing and implementing public education programs, and strategically positioning initiatives for success. CRL has consulted on a variety of local ballot measures from major infrastructure initiatives like FasTracks and TABOR "de-Brucing," to a tax increase to fund college scholarships in Denver. We work with clients every step of the way and advise on media relations, community engagement, and voter activation to build broad coalitions that propel clients to victory. To learn more about the CRL team, visit www.crlassociates.com.

RFP Section II: Specification & Requirements (see "Original RFP Form Signed - Hilltop Public Solutions" attachment for signed acknowledgements):

Requirement - 8-10 years' experience: As mentioned above, Hilltop opened its doors in 2006, meaning the firm turns 18 years old this year. Furthermore, between Craig Hughes and Chris Griswold - Hilltop Colorado Partners, Tanya Nathan - Principal, and Lindsey Rasmussen - Senior Associate, Hilltop Colorado staff has combined over 70 years' experience working on campaigns in general. Hilltop Colorado has consulted on dozens of winning local funding measures in that time.

CRL is entering its 42nd year providing local government relations consulting. Partner Roger Sherman joined CRL Associates in 2005 and is highly respected for his skills in public positioning and local campaign management. Vice President Danielle Glover brings expertise in coalition building, grassroots mobilization, and the endorsement process. Founder Maria Garcia Berry will provide strategic advice throughout the project. CRL team members have the public-policy expertise and capacity to provide the level of attention required.

Specifications - Timeline: Hilltop and CRL are able to begin work at any time with the district and suggest beginning in early February. Hilltop and CRL are able to provide analysis and consultative guidance to inform district and Board discussions and decision-making within the date of the Contract (deadline no later than July 1, 2024) - final timeline will be agreed upon in the final Contract. A proposed timeline for scope of services is in the section below.

Scope of Services & Approach

Jefferson County (JeffCo) Public Schools is facing challenges in providing competitive employee compensation, maintaining safe and welcoming learning environments, and offering future-ready

programming due to limited revenues. Despite closing 21 schools and cutting \$19M in expenses in 2023, the district lags behind its neighbors in local revenue generation. Federal ESSER funding of \$41.324M has been crucial in addressing the impact of the pandemic and enrollment decline. Previous Mill Levy Overrides, although successful, haven't matched inflation, reducing the district's financial power. In contrast to nearby districts, Jeffco hasn't fully utilized its override capacity. In 2024, the District will engage the Alliance of Jeffco stakeholders to focus on maximizing local revenue for enhancing educational quality, ensuring safe and modern learning spaces, and preparing graduates for a dynamic world.

This effort, culminating in five meetings from January to April 2024, aims to support a mill levy override request for essential investments in these areas. The ultimate goal is to decide when the Jefferson County School Board will refer a mill levy ballot raise to the ballot: August 2024 or August 2025. Hilltop Public Solutions and CRL Associates are ready to lead this process as the district's consultant.

Based on Hilltop and CRL's extensive experience and the scope of the RFP, we propose the following scope of work and timeline:

February 2024: Understanding District's Financial Landscape and Revenue Opportunities

- Collaborate with district staff to gain a deep understanding of the district's financial challenges.
- Work alongside the district's municipal advisor to propose effective approaches for addressing current and future fiscal challenges.
- Focus on identifying and exploring viable opportunities for maximizing local revenue in support of the district.
- Begin development of an educational and grasstops outreach plan.

March 2024: Ballot Question Advisory and Outreach Planning

- Draft and submit an educational and grasstops outreach plan targeting both direct stakeholders (employees, families) and broader community members.
- Develop a strategic communications plan, including key messaging, targeting, and tactics.
- Analyze the landscape of anticipated statewide and local initiatives to identify synergies or competition with Jeffco's objectives.

April 2024: Community Engagement and Drafting Ballot Language

- Execute initial phase of community outreach plan.
- Host first series of community and stakeholder meetings.
- Develop initial draft of ballot language.
- Hire a pollster and begin development of a comprehensive poll.
- Continue development and execution of strategic communications plan.

May 2024: Community Engagement and Polling

- Finalize and carry out polling.
- Continue community and stakeholder outreach meetings through community outreach plan.

June 2024: Finalizing Ballot Language and Messaging

- Analyze poll results and utilize to revise messaging and approach as needed.
- Final messaging memo submitted.
- Finalize ballot language.
- Continue stakeholder engagement and community meetings through community outreach plan.

July 2024: Final Advisory and Continued Engagement

- Submit advisory memo on political landscape, including advising on 2024/25 ballot access, political landscape, and next steps.
- Conclude community and stakeholder meetings - wrapping community outreach plan.
- Consider next steps for community engagement.

Ongoing Throughout Project:

- Attend and actively participate in public meetings related to the district's funding and ballot initiatives. Analyze and incorporate public input and feedback into strategic planning.
- Assign a dedicated Project Manager for weekly check-ins and oversight. Hilltop will be providing support from 3 additional staff to the Project Manager.
- Provide regular updates and recommendations to the Board and key stakeholders.
- Ensure the project remains on schedule and within budget.
- Manage project to ensure it remains on schedule and budget.
- Adhere to RFP performance standards and deliverables.
- Apply lessons learned and successful strategies from past campaigns, including our work with Colorado Education Association, Proposition EE & Preschool for All Coloradans (Prop II), Proposition 123, the 2016 and 2020 Denver Public Schools Bond and Mill campaign, and No on 2F.
- Leverage our proven ability to manage complex public affairs and ballot initiatives effectively.

Hilltop Public Solutions Case Studies & Relevant Experience

Colorado Education Association – In 2023, Colorado Education Association hired Hilltop to help with public relations and communications for the contentious Woodland Park School Board race in Elbert County. We worked to gain news coverage, planned and executed press conferences, and ran the digital media campaign.

Preschool for All Coloradans (Proposition II) and Proposition EE – Colorado voters passed a measure in 2020 to raise taxes on nicotine and vaping products to fund K-12 education and give every child access to pre-school. Getting there was no easy task – and Hilltop led the coalition that got it done. Hilltop led the effort to build a legislative policy and coalition that could pass and be signed into law by Governor Polis. This involved close coordination with a team of lobbyists, earned media, pressure on influential grassroots players, and constant changes to the proposal in order to help it pass, as well as negotiating with tobacco companies to gauge their level of opposition. In a furious end of the 2020 session, HB 1427 passed with *bi-partisan* majorities in both chambers. Hilltop then led the campaign to successfully pass the ballot measure, supervising all aspects of the campaign including earned and paid media, fundraising, and digital operations. Prop EE passed with 67% of the vote despite over \$5 million in opposition spending from the tobacco industry.

The measure was a success and more tax was collected than the Blue Book had estimated. There ended up being over \$23 million in excess funds, and TABOR requires Coloradans to vote on retention of the tax money. Since the tax was exclusively on tobacco and nicotine wholesalers, the tax money would have only been returned to them and not all Colorado voters. In 2023, Proposition II was referred to keep the excess funds for pre-k education. Hilltop Public Solutions formed and led Preschool for All Coloradans, the coalition backing Proposition II. We negotiated on ballot and blue book language to ensure clarity for

the voters, built a statewide coalition of over 100 elected officials and organizations and provided messaging guidance and a communications plan to the coalition. We worked with partners to organize volunteer events both in-person and remotely and set up a targeted digital ad program. Proposition II ended up passing with nearly the same margins as Proposition EE, but due to Coloradans' thoughts on TABOR and tax returns the campaign was critical to ensure easy passage.

2016 and 2020 Denver Public Schools Bond and Mill – Hilltop Public Solutions served as the lead consultant for the 2016 and 2020 Denver Bond and Mill campaign. In 2016, were seeking a \$57 million mill levy increase and a \$572 million bond increase, the largest bond and mill increase in Colorado's history. The funds would be used to build and repair schools and increase funding for classroom programs. Hilltop managed every aspect of the campaign, which included a robust mail and social media program and a large district-wide outreach effort which raised over \$690,000. Our efforts resulted in a victory with over 65% of Denver voters supporting both measures.

Proposition 123 – In 2022, Hilltop ran a ballot measure to increase affordable housing across the state of Colorado. Hilltop managed all aspects of the campaign for Proposition 123, including overseeing fundraising, managing the campaign budget, all spending decisions, hiring and managing campaign staff, and running communications and paid media efforts. Hilltop established a steering committee and led multiple meetings a week covering all aspects of the campaign including public events, endorsements, outreach, messaging, polling, digital and endorsements. Hilltop oversaw debates in favor of the measure, created talking points, a rollout plan, and a website. Hilltop worked with the policy team to identify the top talking points that needed to be underscored with our messaging and ran digital and media campaigns based on strategic targeting and polling. Proposition 123 passed with 52% of the vote and outperformed many other measures and candidates in their districts. This is the first measure to successfully pass and mandate TABOR refunds to pay for a program to benefit Coloradans.

No on 2F – In 2021, Hilltop ran a 'no' campaign against ballot initiative 2F, which, if passed, would have meant that the many Denver residents who share housing costs with other adult roommates would have been at risk of being forced out of their homes and into potentially much more expensive housing arrangements. Hilltop managed all aspects of the campaign for 'No on 2F,' including building a coalition of supporters, overseeing the fundraising, managing the campaign budget, coming up with a strategic communications and digital strategy and implementing it, as well as hiring a team of highly competent staff members who were familiar with the housing landscape of Denver. The ballot initiative lost by a margin of almost 70%-30%.

Other Colorado Success Stories for Hilltop Public Solutions

- Lead consultants on a multi-year project with nonprofit organization aimed at the ultimately successful goal of fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (2013 - Present).
- Manage the nation's largest climate and environmental justice nonprofit funder (2015 - Present).
- Managed Denver Mayor Mike Johnston's campaign in Spring 2023 - this campaign was victorious in a large playing field of over 15 Mayoral candidates running for the seat.
- Successfully helped flip the Denver School Board by running Marlene De La Rosa's campaign in 2023.
- Successfully steered US Senator Michael Bennet to victory in 2010, 2016, and 2022 as his lead campaign consultants.
- Oversaw Dave Young and Jena Griswold's reelection campaigns in 2022.
- Worked with the Senate Majority Project IE to defeat Cory Gardner and elect John

Hickenlooper to the US Senate in 2020.

- Managed the 2020 winning Yes on National Popular Vote ballot measure in Colorado - the first time the issue has ever come before voters in any state.
- Guided three statewide candidate victories in 2018: Attorney General Phil Weiser, Secretary of State Jena Griswold, and State Treasurer Dave Young, as well as Joe Neguse for Congress in CD2.
- Managed the “No on Amendment 74” campaign in 2018.
- Managed Callie Renninson for CU Regent, Pat Quinn for Broomfield Mayor, and Happy Haynes for Denver School Board.
- Senior Advisor for both Obama for America campaigns in Colorado.

CRL Associates Relevant Experience

Prosperity Denver (Initiative 300) – CRL led the successful campaign to pass a .08 percent sales tax increase to fund post-secondary scholarships for Denver high school graduates. The first in the nation pay-for-success program to help more kids get a post-secondary education, the new funding will underwrite scholarships, based on a sliding income scale, for eligible Denver residents between the ages of 18 and 25 who have lived in Denver for at least 36 months. It passed in 2018 with 52% of Denver voters supporting both measures. Voters defeated a similar initiative in 2015.

La Plata County – CRL facilitated a broad-based Community Steering Committee to engage key stakeholders and citizens in a discussion about how best to address the county’s transportation-related capital improvement and operational needs, while maintaining a structurally balanced budget and preserving the County’s long-range fiscal sustainability. The five-month process to review studies, analysis and recommendations regarding capital improvement and weigh various funding options resulted in a consensus recommendation that the Board of County Commissioners refer to the voters a mill levy increase dedicated solely to the Road and Bridge Fund.

Belmar – CRL introduced real estate developer Continuum to the former Villa Italia Mall site in the City of Lakewood. CRL’s involvement continued beyond the initial introduction to include robust public involvement processes that led to successfully entitling the site and the adoption of a public-private financing plan. The 100-acre mall became the city’s first mixed-use, state-of-the-art, green-built urban renewal project.

Other School and Tax Related – Lone Tree Yes on 2a – use tax initiative, Citizens for Denver Public Schools (mill levy), Keep Thornton Strong (zoning issue), Lakewood (sales tax increase), Commerce City (bond), Tourism Pays (increase in Denver’s lodging tax), Keep Washington Rolling (gas tax protection – State of Washington) Citizens for the Future of Commerce City (bond) Citizens for Cherry Creek Schools (bond, mill levy), Citizens for DPS (bond, mill levy), Citizens for Douglas County Schools (bond, mill levy), YES on 1A (road \$)