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Spin can't change fact of Colorado's TABOR vote

BY GEORGE LIPPENCOTT

Alan Cobb's attempt to downplay the recent passage of Colorado's Referendum C suspending its Taxpayer's Bill of Rights deserves a response ("TABOR vote hype doesn't match fact," Nov. 11 Opinion). Getting 52 percent of the vote is a win, plain and simple.

The original TABOR passed in 1992 with less than 53 percent of the vote, and that was on the third try. Yes, the Referendum D failed, but getting C passed was what mattered if Colorado is to regain its balance after several years of draconian budget cuts.

Cobb's economic growth argument displays a common logical fallacy -- that if an event happens after another event, the first event caused the second. Like most states, Colorado experienced a recession in the late 1980s, which depressed its pre-TABOR growth and business climate rankings. And a majority of states (and many nations) boomed during the '90s, when Colorado also prospered -- not because of TABOR but in spite of it.

Further, if TABOR had so contributed to Colorado's business climate, you'd expect the state's business leaders and politicians to have strenuously opposed changing it. Yet nearly every local chamber of commerce, city council and daily newspaper; 72 percent of state legislators; and Colorado's very conservative Gov. Bill Owens all supported Referendum C to suspend TABOR.

What TABOR's supporters such as Cobb can't admit is that the private sector needs its public sector partner to achieve economic growth, sound schools, good jobs with decent wages, and a desirable quality of life.

One can argue that Kansas is not Colorado and that the proposed TABOR in Kansas is not identical to Colorado's. But carefully parsed state differentiations and minor formulaic proposals aside, both states are dealing with a TABOR. And on Nov. 1, Coloradans who have lived through 12 years of TABOR came to the conclusion that it has been a mistake.

Colorado has not fared well under TABOR, and there is no reason to believe that Kansas would do better. It could do much worse.

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