

Stop the 65% Deception!

**A Toolkit for Coloradoans Who Care
about Public Education**



This toolkit is the first in a new series of special reports addressing threats to America’s public school system. We hope you will find it useful in your own efforts to stand up for our public schools.



People For the American Way believes that a strong public education system is an essential component of our American democracy.

Throughout our 25-year history, PFAW has confronted the Right’s attempts to weaken public schools and impose their ideological agendas on teachers, students, and textbooks.

We advocate proven, effective reforms that help ensure that every child in America has access to a quality public education – and will continue to oppose attempts by Radical Right leaders and their ideological allies to undermine or dismantle public education.

For more information about PFAW’s education work visit the [Public Education](#) section of our web page.

People For the American Way is a staunch defender of public education. We believe that public education – like an independent judiciary and fair elections – is an essential component of our American democracy. Public schools have served our nation well, yet many schools in poor communities struggle to provide a quality education to their students. People For enthusiastically supports genuine school reforms that improve struggling schools, minimize disparities between rich and poor schools, and strengthen our already strong schools. However, some policies that fly the banner of “reform” would actually undermine public education. The so-called “65 percent solution” is one of those bogus “reforms” that would harm our schools and students.

What is being promoted as the 65 percent solution – and what we call the 65 percent deception – is a seemingly simple requirement that school districts spend at least 65 percent of their total budget on “classroom” expenses. While that might sound good, the devil is in the details:

- The 65% deception uses **a decades-old formula that counts athletic equipment – but not teacher training, libraries, nurses, or school lunches** – as “classroom expenses.” It’s a definition that **makes no sense**, and won’t do anything to help students learn.
- The 65% deception does not include any additional funding for needy school districts. **Already struggling schools would be forced to cut funds from vital areas.**
- One-size-fits-all schemes like the 65% deception **undermine local control of schools** and fail to account for the individual needs of school districts.
- 65% is a number that **comes from nowhere**. Research shows **no relationship between student performance and any percentage of spending on “classroom expenses.”**

So why are we debating a plan that is based on a meaningless number and would undermine our schools? This is all about cynical and destructive politics. Organizations and individuals who have an ideological commitment to publicly funded school vouchers and other privatization schemes are putting lots of money into political campaigns that would impose the 65 percent deception on school districts around the country.

The 65 percent deception is being marketed in several states by a national organization called First Class Education. This group is headed by a long-time Republican political operative. It has received funding from internet millionaire Patrick Byrne, who has provided substantial funding to pro-voucher organizations and has publicly called for the abolishment of the National Education Association. Their stated political aims are to cause disunity in professional education organizations, soften up certain voters to vouchers, and increase conservative turnout in elections via use of the initiative process – all at the expense of our public schools and our children.

People For the American Way supports school reform proposals that are honest, effective, and research-driven. We support proven solutions such as decreasing class-size, increasing parental and community involvement in schools, and expanding professional development opportunities for teachers. We welcome serious debate over how best to fix the problems that do exist in our public schools, but we oppose political attempts to hijack the debate over school reform. The complex problems facing our schools require more than bumper-sticker solutions.

The 65% Activist Toolkit

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The 65% Deception

The so-called 65% “solution” is a plan to require school districts to spend at least 65% of their total operating budgets on classroom expenses. The plan, which supporters call the “65 Cent Solution,” derives the distinction between classroom expenses and out-of-classroom expenses from a formula used by the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). According to this formula, coaches’ salaries and athletic equipment are considered classroom expenses, but libraries and teacher training are not. There is no empirical evidence showing a correlation between minimum expenditures in the classroom and increased student performance. The 65% “solution” is a plan being marketed by a right-leaning organization called First Class Education (FCE), which is run by a long-time Republican political operative. There are state-level affiliates of the group in several states. FCE is funded by a millionaire CEO who regularly gives money to pro-voucher causes and candidates. Differing versions of the plan have already been enacted in Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Kansas. The plan will be on the ballot as an initiative in Oklahoma and Colorado this fall. Kenneth Blackwell, GOP gubernatorial candidate in Ohio, has endorsed the plan. The 65% plan will not provide for an increase in school funding and would effectively mandate a cut in funding to important educational support programs.

The School Funding Shell Game

If enacted into law, the 65% plan would require schools to redistribute budgetary allocations for out-of classroom expenses into “classroom expenses.” FCE,¹ the group marketing this plan, derived its definition of expenditures from a formula used by NCES,² the Department of Education’s data clearing house. This formula for division of classroom and out-of-classroom expenditures was developed decades ago for unrelated purposes.

The National Center for Educational Statistics requires schools to report budget data in two broad categories called *instruction* and *support*. The NCES definition of instruction includes any activities in which students and teachers interact directly, but not necessarily in the classroom. The NCES data indicate that *instruction* includes the cost of teaching students in schools, hospitals, at home, or through approved media. *Instruction* also includes such things as coaches’ salaries and the cost of athletic equipment.

Support programs, according to NCES, include testing, programs to improve attendance, social work, counseling, teacher training, and curriculum development. *Support* programs also include the salaries of librarians, the cost of library resource materials, and programs to assist students and staff in the use of the library. Earlier this year, the American Library Association adopted a resolution calling on the Department of

¹ www.firstclasseducation.org

² US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Financial Accounting for Local and State School Districts, November, 2003

Education to redefine librarians as providers of *instruction*.³ The American Association of School Librarians has endorsed that resolution.⁴ Many of the services special education students receive - such as speech/language therapy, behavioral modification counseling, and audiology - are considered *support* even though these services have a direct impact on a student's ability to perform well in the classroom.

According to the NCES, U.S. schools currently spend 61.4% of their total budgets on *instruction*. The 65% plan therefore would require a shift of about \$13 billion from *support* to *instruction*. The 65% plan does not advocate - and indeed is being marketed as an alternative to - increasing school funding. The 65% plan, therefore, would effectively mandate a cut in funding to *support* programs.

No Rational Basis for this “Solution”

There is no objective research supporting a correlation between increased funding in *instruction*, as FCE defines it, and increased student performance. It is certainly true that spending more money for instructional purposes would benefit any school system, but without providing additional resources the 65% “solution” would require major cuts in supplemental services – programs that are often most helpful for the lowest achieving students and schools.

FCE argues that the 65% “solution” will increase test scores:

Rank all 50 states by standardized test scores and you'll find the top five states place the highest percentage in the classroom – averaging 64.12%. The bottom five states for test scores place the lowest percentage in the classroom – averaging 59.46%.⁵

It is unclear which standardized tests FCE is referencing. However, a report from the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University points out the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only test that allows this sort of comparison among states. The most recent NAEP data available to FCE when the previous statement was issued were from 2003. In the Arizona State report, Gerald Bracey points out some obvious flaws in FCE's interpretation of the data:

Byrne has claimed that five states ‘with the highest standardized test scores’ (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota and Connecticut) spent an average of 64.1 percent of their budgets on instruction while the five lowest scoring states (Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, New Mexico and the District of Columbia) spent only 59.5

³ American Library Association, “ALA Resolution in the Instructional Classification of School Librarians, School Library Journal, 2006

⁴ D.L. Whelan, “AASL Endorses Resolution on ‘65 Percent Solution,’” School Library Journal, Jan. 27, 2006

⁵ <http://www.firstclasseducation.org/faqs.asp#results>

percent. Obviously these two clusters of states differ on many more variables than just where they spent their school budgets.⁶

It is not shocking that some states with a relatively high level of wealth score higher on standardized exams than do states with a high proportion of rural and urban poverty. The differences among these states only serve to highlight the need for local control over school budgets. Indeed, national mandates like the 65% scheme ignore the many variables that affect schools in any given state.

Additionally, FCE ignores data that contradict its conclusions. For instance, Colorado and Iowa had reading scores as high as Minnesota's but spent only 57.3% and 59.5% of their budgets on *instruction*. Conversely, Tennessee spent 64.1% on *instruction* and scored 5 points below the national average, one full year behind the lowest scoring of the top 5 states.

A report issued by Standard and Poor's education group, School Matters, has similar conclusions:

Although there are a number of districts that spend more than 65% on instruction and achieve above-average proficiency levels, there are many districts that exceed the 65% goal and achieve below-average proficiency rates. Interestingly some of the highest performing districts spend less than 65% and some of the lowest-performing districts spend more than 65%. **Student performance does not noticeably or consistently increase at 65%, or any other percentage spent on instruction.**⁷ (*emphasis added*)

Standard and Poor's plainly cautions that their findings do not indicate "money doesn't matter," or that school districts should not put all the money they can into classroom instruction. There is, however, no link whatsoever between spending any minimum percentage on "classroom instruction," as defined by FCE, and student performance. As for how FCE arrived at the 65% number, it may have been simply because only a handful of states exceeded it. The number has no basis in objective research.

A strictly rational analysis of the 65% "solution" shows that there is no reasonable expectation that implementing any mandatory minimum allocation of school funds to *instruction* will increase measurable student performance. Conversely, there is a strong argument that forcing school districts to divert funds from *support* services could be harmful, particularly to underachieving and special-needs children

⁶ Gerald W. Bracey, "A Policy Maker's Guide to 'The 65% Solution'" Proposals, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, April 2006

⁷ School Matters, A Service of Standard and Poor's, "The Issues and Implications of the '65 Percent Solution,'" Fall 2005

The “Solution’s” Goals: split the unions, soften voters to vouchers, and increase ultra-conservative turn out through ballot initiatives

Media reports suggest that the idea behind the 65% “solution” came from Patrick Byrne, the millionaire founder and CEO of Overstock.com. According to George Will, who gave the 65% “solution” its name, Warren Buffet once asked Byrne which competitor he would shoot if he had a ‘silver bullet.’ Byrne’s answer was the National Education Association. Byrne is fond of referring to education professionals as “educrats.”⁸ Since 1995, Byrne has been a Board member of the pro-voucher Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, named for the conservative economist whose work provided the intellectual underpinning of the voucher movement, and his wife.

Byrne donated the money to start FCE, which is run by an Arizona-based Republican consultant named Tim Mooney. In an unsigned, undated memo that Mooney has admitted writing,⁹ he argues that the 65% “solution” gives Republicans “a viable answer to ‘in the classroom improvement of education’ without the need to call for a tax increase, offsetting budget cuts in other popular programs or gimmick accounting and deficit spending.” Among the other tangible political benefits of the 65% “solution” Mooney lists are: (1) Splitting the education unions; (2) Softening up targeted segments of voters to vouchers; (3) Defining the debate over school funding in terms of taxes and government spending; and (4) Increasing voter turn-out among the conservative base through the use of the initiative process.

Mooney also points out that advocacy of the 65% “solution” will allow groups on the right to use unlimited non-personal money for political positioning advantages in election campaigns.¹⁰ The FCE website directs media inquiries to Mooney and to Karen Northon of Creative Response Concepts, the Virginia-based communications firm that developed attack ads against former presidential candidate John Kerry on behalf of “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.” FCE appears poised to disseminate issues advertising on behalf of candidates who support their plan.

The 65% plan was quickly endorsed by Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, but has met with resistance from other corners of the Right. Frederick Hess of AEI cautions “well-managed firms know that one-size fits all management went out with lava lamps and leisure suits.”¹¹ Jay Green and Jonathan Butcher of the National Review have criticized the plan for “imposing a mandate on how schools use their resources without demanding results.”¹² Kevin Carey of Education Sector rightly pointed out that the 65% plan ignores important costs associated with schools.¹³ Even arch-conservative

⁸ George F. Will, “One Man’s Way to Better School,” *The Washington Post*, April 10 2005

⁹ D. Ranganathan, “65 Percent Solution Touted for Classroom Funding,” *Sacramento Bee*, Jan. 26, 2006

¹⁰ Unsigned memo, “Keep 65% in the Classroom for Kids and Teachers,” First Class Education, undated

¹¹ Frederick Hess, “The 65% Solution,” *Washington Times*, Feb. 22, 2006

¹² Jay Green and Jonathan Butcher, “The 65-Cent Delusion,” *National Review*, March 2, 2006

¹³ Kevin Carey, “65-Percent Plan Fails Basic Math,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, Jan. 22, 2006

education scholar Chester Finn has complained that “simple external controls have both the virtues and shortcomings of simplicity.”¹⁴

In the states, the 65% “solution” has met with some political success. In Texas, Governor Rick Perry has enacted the 65% plan as an executive order. The Georgia legislature recently enacted a law based on the plan. The Louisiana legislature has passed legislation calling on the state education authority to implement the 65% plan, but that legislation is non-binding. The Kansas legislature included a form of the 65% plan in a recent bill that increased school funding by 10%. On the other hand, in Florida, Governor Jeb Bush failed in his attempts to enact the 65% plan as part of a larger education bill. This fall, voters will have their say on the 65% scheme in Oklahoma and Colorado, where it will be on the ballot as an initiative and in Ohio, where republican gubernatorial candidate Kenneth Blackwell of Ohio has endorsed it.

¹⁴ Chester Finn, “The 65 Percent Solution,” *The Education Gadfly*, 6(7), Feb. 16, 2006

Real Conservatives Recognize a Gimmick When They See One

“One of the worst ideas in Education”

Rod Paige, Former U.S. Secretary of Education¹⁵

“The 65 Percent Solution is a gimmick that doesn’t begin to solve the biggest problems in school funding, much less education at large.”¹⁶

Chester E. Finn Jr., Assistant Secretary of Education for President Reagan and President of the Fordham Institute

“Simple external controls have both the virtues and the shortcomings of simplicity. Remember wage and price controls as means of curbing inflation? It turned out that what had to be done was to solve the underlying economic problems. Same with schooling.”¹⁷

Chester E. Finn Jr.

“If a ‘corporate reformer’ acquired Wal-Mart and decreed that 65 percent of all revenues be spent on floor staff and in-store improvements, Wall Street would greet him with derision. There is nothing innately wrong with such moves -- but well-managed firms know that one-size-fits-all management went out with lava lamps and leisure suits.”

Frederick M. Hess of the American Enterprise Institute¹⁸

“Previous reform efforts have rightly pushed to empower schools to make decisions about how they can best allocate their resources while holding them accountable for producing results. Schools should have this freedom to control their own inputs while we demand better outcomes because there is no ‘right’ way to use inputs. Schools are in the best position to make these judgments. The 65-cent solution pushes in the opposite direction, imposing a mandate on how schools use their resources without demanding results.”

Jay P. Greene, Manhattan Institute¹⁹

“Unfortunately, facile public policies of the sort promoted by ‘First Class Schools’ often find support among politicians wanting to look like they’re providing more resources to children without making any hard choices or finding any real money.”

Kevin Carey, Education Sector²⁰

¹⁵ Rod Paige, “For School Equality, Try Mobility,” *New York Times*, June 27, 2006

¹⁶ Chester Finn, “The 100% Solution,” Fordham Institute, June 27, 2006

¹⁷ Chester Finn, “From Checker’s Desk,” *Education Gadfly*, Feb. 16, 2006

¹⁸ Frederick Hess, “The 65% Solution,” *Washington Times*, Feb. 22, 2006

¹⁹ Jay Green and Jonathan Butcher, “The 65-Cent Delusion,” *National Review*, March 2, 2006

²⁰ Kevin Carey, “65-Percent Plan Fails Basic Math,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, Jan. 22, 2006

What Professional Education Organizations Say about the 65% Deception

National Education Association – “...a real and growing threat to sound school funding”²¹

American Federation of Teachers – “[T]he so-called 65 percent solution is another untested proposal that does nothing to guarantee greater student achievement or that school districts will adjust their spending in a manner that creates greater efficiency – a stated goal of this initiative.”²²

National PTA – “[T]he 65 Percent Solution is fatally flawed and will hinder, not help our nation’s schools in accomplishing the goal of providing every child with a well-rounded, high-quality education.”²³

American Association of School Administrators – “...the definition of instruction promoted by the backers of the ‘65 Percent Rule’ is not prioritized correctly. For example, direct therapeutic services, such as those provided by speech therapists, school psychologists and school nurses are not included, but voluntary recreational activities supported by athletic coaches are.”²⁴

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development – “...federal budget cuts coupled with the 65 percent solution could have devastating effects on the allocation of already scarce education dollars.”²⁵

²¹ NEA, “65% Funding Scheme: More Deception than Solution,” June 5, 2006

²² AFT Executive Council, “Opposition to the 65 Percent Solution Initiative,” 2006

²³ National PTA, http://www.pta.org/ia_pta_positions_1138312705671.html

²⁴ AASA, “Final Position Statement on the ‘65 Percent Rule,’

²⁵ Gene R. Carter, “The 65 Percent Solution – A Troubling Formula for Education’s Future,” April 2006

Who's Behind The 65% Deception

First Class Education (FCE) is the right-leaning organization created with the sole purpose of promoting the 65% Deception across the country.

- FCE is funded by *Patrick Byrne*, an internet tycoon who regularly funds pro-voucher candidates and causes.
- *Creative Response Concepts*, the Virginia-based communications firm which spearheaded the Swift Boat attack campaign, handles FCE's media relations,
- State-level PACs have been created in several states, including Colorado, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Patrick Byrne, the millionaire founder and CEO of Overstock.com, developed the idea for the 65% solution, and has donated at least \$100,000 to FCE.

- Byrne has stated his desire to *eradicate the National Education Association*, the country's largest labor union, which represents teachers and other school personnel nationwide.
- Byrne serves as a Board Member of the *pro-voucher Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation*.
- In 2005, Byrne declared a "*jihad*" against those involved in what he claims was a market conspiracy to hurt his company.

Tim Mooney, a Republican operative from Arizona, runs FCE.

- Mooney is a long-time *Republican political operative*.
- According to Mooney, *the political benefits* of the 65% Deception include splitting the education unions and increasing support for vouchers programs.
- Mooney has also suggested that the plan will allow for right-wing groups to use *unlimited non-personal money for political positioning* in upcoming campaigns.

George Will, the ultra-conservative columnist, is a supporter of the 65% solution and developed the program's moniker.

Right-wing activist **Grover Norquist**, whose 'starve the beast' philosophy advocates significant cuts in public school funding, was among the first to embrace the 65% Deception.

Ohio gubernatorial candidate **Kenneth Blackwell**, who once advocated the elimination of all state funding of public education, has said he will enact the 65% Deception if elected.

In Michigan, supreme voucher pusher **Dick DeVos** has endorsed the 65% Deception as party of his gubernatorial campaign.

Points to Consider

There is no evidence to show that putting 65% of a school's budget into "classroom" expenditures makes any difference whatsoever. Some successful schools put less than 65% of the budget into the classroom; some put in more. 65% is not a magic number and it won't fix broken schools.

The 65% Deception won't fully fund our schools or help poor schools. Supporters want us to think that by slicing the pie differently, schools can make the pie bigger. They can't. Schools deserve full funding, not budget gimmicks.

The classification of "classroom" and "non-classroom" expenses is completely arbitrary. It penalizes spending on libraries and rewards spending on athletic equipment. That doesn't make sense.

The 65% Deception would force schools to cut important programs just because they are "non-classroom" expenses. Teacher training, curriculum development, librarians and library resources, nurses, transportation, counselors, speech therapists, building maintenance, and security would all face likely budget cuts.

Supporters of 65% have given tens of millions of dollars to voucher programs. Ultra-conservative advocates of the 65% Deception are not friends of public education. Their goal is to undermine public schools, not fix them.

The 65% Deception isn't supported by educators. It's supported by ultra-conservative politicians. Education groups, researchers, and teachers across the country have seen 65% for the fraud it is. 65% is a political tool, not school reform.

The National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National PTA and American Association of School Administrators all oppose the 65% Deception. They know that it will harm our schools without helping our students.

There are proven ways to improve schools. This isn't one of them. Failing schools need smaller class sizes, better teacher training, and adequate resources to teach our children. We should have real reform, not political showboating.

The Facts About 65%

What is it?

- **The misleadingly named “65% solution” is a plan to require school districts to spend at least 65% percent of their total operating budgets on *classroom* expenses. The 65% Deception will not provide for an increase in school funding and would effectively mandate a cut in funding to important educational non-classroom programs.**
- There is no empirical evidence showing a correlation between minimum expenditures in the classroom and increased student performance.

What’s Wrong With It?

- **The 65% Deception assumes that schools are already adequately funded and punishes poor schools.** This scheme would place requirements on how school systems spend their money but not offer any additional funding to help poor schools improve. The 65% Deception places the responsibility on local school systems to raise any additional money they might need to improve instruction and provide strong support services and healthy environments outside the classroom. This scheme punishes poor districts.
- **The 65% Deception prioritizes athletics and field trips, which are considered *classroom expenses*, over libraries, teacher training and curriculum development, which are considered *non-classroom expenses*.** Long-time Republican political operative Tim Mooney said the nonsensical division of classroom expenses is helpful “for political reasons.” This scheme uses a distinction between classroom expenses and non-classroom expenses developed decades ago by the National Center for Education Statistics for unrelated purposes.
- **Teacher training, curriculum development, librarians and library resources, nurses, transportation, counselors, speech therapists, building maintenance, and security would all face likely budget cuts.**
- **65% is a number of political convenience** with absolutely no basis in objective research. There is no evidence this funding plan has any effect on student learning. Only four states spent their money on schools the way the plan dictates when the plan was developed. The 2003 data for the NAEP indicates that Tennessee, for example, spent 64.1% percent on “classroom” instruction, as defined by this scheme, yet the state’s scores were 5 points below the national average and one full grade year behind the lowest scoring of the top 5 states.

Who’s Behind It?

- The 65% Deception is a plan being marketed by an organization called First Class Education (FCE). FCE is funded by a pro-voucher millionaire and receives money from at least one pro-voucher group. Differing versions of the plan have already been enacted in Texas, Georgia, Louisiana and Kansas. The scheme will be a ballot initiative in Oklahoma and Colorado this fall. Other states being targeted for promotion of this plan include Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, California, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Kenneth Blackwell, GOP gubernatorial candidate in Ohio, has also endorsed the plan and is making it part of his campaign platform

- **The idea for a national campaign was developed by right-wing Arizona Republican strategist Tim Mooney and given its misleading moniker by admirer George Will.** With money from Overstock.com founder and CEO Patrick Byrne, Mooney has set up an organization called First Class Education, whose only mission is to convince right-wing politicians of the political value of this so-called “solution.”
- Patrick Byrne, the primary funder and a board member of the pro-voucher Milton and Rose Freidman Foundation, once said that if he could shoot any one competitor with a “silver bullet,” he would choose the National Education Association. In April, 2005 George Will wrote a column praising Byrne in which he coined the term ‘The 65 Percent Solution.’

Why Are They Pushing It?

- A study released by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University says the 65% Deception “**was developed in hopes of producing political gains, not in hopes of stimulating pedagogical improvements. The benefits listed by the proposal’s developers are political, not educational.**”
- **This scheme is linked to vouchers and efforts to weaken class size reduction legislation.** Republican strategist Mooney writes, “targeted segments of voters might be more greatly predisposed to supporting voucher and charter school proposals....”

What Others Are Saying

- The Atlanta Journal Constitution writes “**the idea makes about as much sense as health insurers insisting that 65% of any claim go only to the surgeon, ignoring the cost of the support team, the nurses, the anesthesia, the surgical room, and the medical equipment.**”
- “Though classroom computers would be counted under the 65-percent rule, the servers, switches, wiring, and other equipment needed to power the networks these machines run on would not.” (eSchool News)
- The National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National PTA and American Association of School Administrators all oppose the 65% Deception because it will do more harm than good to our nation’s schools. The National Education Association calls the plan “more deception than solution” and the American Federation of Teachers says the funding scheme would “further undermine struggling schools.”

What Would Be Better?

- Give underperforming schools the resources necessary to improve!
- Advocate education policy grounded in objective research!
- Focus on providing teachers with the support and training they need to teach our children!

Send a Letter to the Editor Opposing the 65% Deception!

All newspapers require a full name, address (including zip code), and daytime phone number to be included with the letter. Other than your city, none of your personal information will be published. The newspapers just need it to verify the letter's authenticity.

If sending a letter electronically, send it in plain text in the body of the email. Because of online security concerns, most newspapers will not open email attachments.

You should call to follow up with editorial page to make sure your letter is printed in a timely fashion. A simple call to the Editorial page can go a long way!

Contact Information for Major Papers in Colorado

Denver Post – Word limit: 200. Send to openforum@denverpost.com or fax to (303) 820-1502.

The Gazette – Word limit: none (but according to the website, “priority will be given to brief letters.”). Send to opinion@gazette.com or fax to (719) 636-0202.

Rocky Mountain News – Word limit: none. Send to letters@rockymountainnews.com.

Fort Collins Coloradoan – Word limit: 250. Send to opinion@coloradoan.com.

Grand Junction Daily Sentinel – Word limit: 350. Send to letters@gjds.com.