



Colorado Influencers

When Katharine Lee Bates wrote “America the Beautiful” after an 1893 trip to Colorado, she could not have known that the “purple mountain majesties” she witnessed would accurately describe the state’s political backdrop entering the second decade of the 21st century.

Colorado has always prided itself on voting for the person before the party, simultaneously sending Republican majorities to the legislature while electing Democratic governors throughout the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s. But as the 20th century came to a close, Republicans solidified their hold, cornering all but a few elective offices. By 2008, though, the Democrats had turned the tables, achieving exactly the position Republicans had held just a couple years prior. Last November’s Republican tidal wave affected Colorado only moderately as the GOP took back one chamber of the legislature and two U.S. House seats, while Democrats kept control of the governor’s mansion and both U.S. Senate seats.

Here is our list of the top political players in this archetypal swing state, whose name is Spanish for red in color, but whose politics is decidedly purple.

Top 5 Republicans

John Suthers

The state's attorney general has a Forrest Gump-like knack for being in the right place at the right time, from his stint interning in a local district attorney's office investigating Ted Bundy to his experience as a U.S. attorney when the first evidence emerged revealing the role of performance-enhancing drugs in baseball and other sports. Described as a "true lawyer's lawyer," he is often criticized by fellow Republicans for not being political enough, yet he did join other state attorneys general in challenging the new federal healthcare mandate. He received more votes last November than any other candidate in the state.

Rob Witwer

Former Republican state representative and party lawyer, his co-authored 2010 book, *The Blueprint: How the Democrats won Colorado (and Why Republicans Everywhere Should Care)*, has become the second-most influential text behind only the Bible to the state's GOP loyalists. In it he explains campaign finance nuances that Democrats have understood and implemented far faster and more effectively than Republicans.



Michelle Morin

Grassroots activist in Colorado Springs. Her "Mom4Freedom" website has signed up more than 100,000 people supporting her effort to repeal the national health-care law. She facilitates conservative discussion, blogs regularly and coordinates liberty groups. Republican candidates throughout the state covet her support.

Frank McNulty

New speaker of the Colorado state House and the new face of Colorado Republicans at the State Capitol. Prag-

matic and sharp, he recruited the candidates and raised the money to earn his party a one-seat edge in last November's elections. Wants to keep his caucus focused on economic issues rather than the social agenda that derailed the party at the Capitol last decade.

Phil Anschutz

Billionaire investor is a major donor to Republican campaigns statewide and nationally. Major candidates need his blessing, his connections and his dollars to be viable.

Top 5 Democrats

John Hickenlooper

Colorado's new governor is a onetime laid-off geologist turned brewpub owner turned unlikely mayor of Denver. His quirkiness, business acumen, unorthodox approach to governing and inherent marketing ability help make him the most popular politician in the state. His commercials have amused political observers throughout the state and the country. His first gubernatorial campaign ad, which featured him taking a shower every time he heard a negative ad, was lauded by the *Washington Post* as possibly the best positive ad of the election cycle. Was asked by President Obama to run for governor after former Gov. Bill Ritter, decided not to run for personal reasons.

Craig Hughes

The go-to campaign manager for any statewide Democrat. Successfully steered the state's appointed Sen. Michael Bennet to his first electoral victory in November and helped deliver the state to President Obama by an impressive 9 points in 2008.

Mike Melanson

Maybe as good as Hughes, but hasn't worked on the tough races. Successfully managed statewide campaigns for Gov. Hickenlooper and the state's other U.S. senator, Mark Udall, in the last two election cycles. Both were expected to win handily and both did.

Tim Gill

A multi-millionaire software developer from the Denver suburbs, he has become arguably the single most powerful behind-the-scenes advocate for gay rights in the entire nation. He oversees a network of donors who steer money to state legislative candidates across the country who don't discriminate.

Ted Trimpa

High-profile lawyer and original member of the Colorado Democracy Alliance, which helped shift the state from red to blue over the last decade. Respected by business and labor as well as feared by Republican candidates. Political liaison to Tim Gill.

Other Republicans

Bill Skewes

Chief of staff to the new one-seat Republican majority in the state House. It's up to him to keep the Republican train running smoothly and its voice viable as a counterweight to a Democratic state Senate and Gov. Hickenlooper. Former lobbyist and staffer to former Republican Gov. Bill Owens.

Josh Penry

Former state Senate minority leader and briefly a gubernatorial candidate, he remains revered by many of the party faithful. Former college football quarterback now in his mid-thirties, he represents a youthful voice and face for a party whose leaders have grayed recently.

Amy Stephens

State House majority leader will be tasked with overseeing floor debate and being chief partisan for Republicans in the chamber. Former staffer for Focus on the Family, she's shifted her emphasis at the Capitol from social issues to economic ones.

Tom Tancredo

Former Republican congressman and American Constitution Party candidate for governor in 2010. The anti-illegal-immigration firebrand has a passionate and loyal following that allowed him to draw nearly 40 percent of the vote as a third-party candidate last November.

Bill Owens

Only Republican governor in Colorado since early 1970s. Generally regarded as a pragmatic conservative who was, in his heyday, the best politician in the state. Smart candidates seek his counsel and, more importantly, listen to it.

Steve Schuck

Colorado Springs developer who is the state's leading advocate for school choice. One-time candidate for governor who lost a Republican primary, but all current and future can-

didates want access to his Rolodex and will travel to his office to hear his tutorial on school vouchers in order to get it.

Jim Daly

President and chief executive officer of Focus on the Family, the Colorado Springs-based ministry whose radio programs, website and messages are valued by social conservatives throughout Colorado—and the nation.

Dr. James Dobson

The founder of Focus on the Family is not nearly as politically active as he once was, but still wields strong influence among evangelical Christians.

Bill Armstrong

Former two-term U.S. senator and current president of Colorado Christian University, his political acumen is still sought out by candidates from across the state. A known straight shooter, he's sunk and righted many a candidate's fortunes over lunch.

Bruce Benson

Former candidate for governor, Benson is now president of the University of Colorado system. A successful geologist by trade, his former six-figure contributions have faded with his entry into the academy, but his connections to moneyed donors are unmatched among Colorado Republicans.

Dick Wadhams

As chairman of the Colorado Republican Party, Wadhams has taken a beating from party faithful who have seen their candidates lose races they were expected to win over the last decade. Wadhams was once seen as the next Karl Rove, guiding Sen. John Thune's (R-South Dakota) initial victory over then-Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle. His political star faded a bit with the "macaca" moment of his candidate, George Allen, in Virginia.

Chuck Berry

Former speaker of the state House now runs the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry. As the state's chamber of commerce, his group can make or break candidates.

Bill Lindsay

An expert on healthcare, having formed an employee benefits group in the '80s. Chaired a statewide commission on healthcare reform and came to the same conclusion former Gov. Mitt Romney did in Massachusetts, that an individual mandate was needed to avoid a government-run program.

Kelly Maher

Runs center-right video blog, WhoSaidYouSaid.com. Oversees numerous videographers who track Democratic candidates and elected officials throughout the state, trying to reveal their "honest" positions on issues.

Mary Smith

Former head of the Denver Republican Party and co-founder of WhoSaidYouSaid.com. More of a fiscal conservative/small-government Republican than a social conservative.

Jon Caldara

Runs libertarian think tank, the Independence Institute. The state's best Republican message-maker hands down, hosting his own talk-radio program and television show. Often rubs establishment Republicans the wrong way as they chafe at his honest assessment of the political scene. Case in point, his favorite political axiom is: "If Republicans can f--- things up, they will."

Cory Gardner

Newly elected congressman from Colorado's 4th congressional district, his political savvy is regarded as impeccable. A current and future star for the party.

Lesley Hollywood

Runs the Northern Colorado Tea Party, a well-organized and active group that campaigned vigorously for Republican candidates last year in one of the fastest-growing areas of the state.

Steve Durham

Former state representative and state senator, the current lobbyist knows the rules of both chambers better than most of those who serve there now. A former Reagan appointee, his big-business clients can impact races up and down the ticket.

Henry Sobanet

The current budget director for Gov. Hickenlooper and former budget official under Gov. Owens is a go-to figure in economic circles for his ability to turn complex strategies into common-sense solutions.

Dean Singleton

Publisher of the *Denver Post* and active in Republican circles. Openly tried to get 2010 Republican candidate for governor, Dan Maes, to quit the race by calling other party members to get them to pull their support.

Dan Haley

Editor of the *Denver Post* editorial page. As the person who oversees the endorsement process for the largest publication in the state, he is often schmoozed over lunch and treated to all sorts of gossip from politicians looking to get in his good graces.

Jeff Crank

Onetime congressional candidate now runs Colorado chapter of Prosperity, a free-market, free-enterprise advocacy group. Also hosts weekly talk radio program in Colorado Springs.

Bob Beauprez

Former congressman and one-time gubernatorial candidate who publishes *A Line of Sight*, an online policy resource for conservatives across the state.

Shari Williams

A political consultant whose Leadership Program of the Rockies has cultivated and trained a large number of Republican candidates running for office from City Hall to the governor's mansion over the last two decades.

Nikki Mata

Runs R Block Party, which seeks to educate and activate the party's grassroots through outreach, technology and volunteerism.

Ryan Call

Party counsel has become go-to guy for election-related legal issues. Expert on campaign finance laws at state and federal level.

Reeves Brown

Runs Club 20, the leading business organization on Colorado's West Slope. Candidates of all political parties make sure they take part in the Club 20 debates held every cycle, and the group has held massive sway for over half a century. Appointed by Gov. Hickenlooper to run state Department of Local Affairs.

Jennifer and Gary Bailey

Run Western Slope Conservative Alliance and are credited with helping then-state Rep. Scott Tipton defeat incumbent Democratic U.S. Rep. John Salazar last November.

Brett Moore

Runs Denver Metro Young Republicans. Group is more socially liberal than the party as a whole and yet it attracts all of the state's top political candidates to its weekly meetings held at an openly gay bar in Denver.

Top Influencer

Michelle Morin

Stay informed.
Seek truth.
Stay free.

Follow Michelle

www.Mom4Freedom.com

Dan Caplis

Popular drive-time radio talk show host who has been itching to run for office himself. His phone lines are regularly clogged with calls from the top political figures in the state.

Tamra Ward

As senior vice president of public affairs and communications for the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, she wields significant influence inside the Capitol and among those who aspire to get there.

Chris Howes

Political consultant who represents the Colorado Retail Council.

Tony Gagliardi

Runs Colorado chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business. His endorsement is a must-have for Republican candidates.

Marc Massey

Worked on Ryan Frazier's losing 2010 congressional campaign and coordinated 2008 McCain volunteer efforts in Colorado. Seen as a bright, fresh voice despite recent losses.

Mike Beasley

Former Owens staffer, now a lobbyist with unmatched political acumen. Doesn't do day-to-day campaign work, but candidates who don't seek out or listen to his advice suffer at their own peril.

Todd Shepherd

Award-winning reporter who moved to the Independence Institute, where he ferrets out government fraud and waste. Has created Complete Colorado, a state-level version of the Drudge Report that has become a daily must-read for anyone interested in politics.

Stephanie Cegielski

Runs Colorado Government Accountability Project that's designed to ensure (largely Democratic) public official compliance with Colorado law. Makes highly charged comments and accusations during campaign season.

Sandra Solin

Runs Capitol Solutions, a lobbying firm with ties to major business interests in the state. Served as spokesperson for group during last election trying to make "card check," a labor-backed means of simplifying unionization, a prominent issue among voters. Former Owens staffer.

Rich Beeson

Has worked on Colorado, national and international campaigns for last two decades. Involved in much of the 527 and 501(c)(4) activity on the right during the last cycle. Served as Republican National Committee political director during 2008 cycle. Reportedly named political director of the as-yet-undeclared 2012 Mitt Romney presidential campaign.

Kent Lambert

Republican state senator who makes no apologies for his overtly conservative views. Plans to sponsor Arizona-like illegal immigration legislation despite worries from some in his own party that it will further alienate moderates.

Scott Gessler

Longtime Republican campaign lawyer rode the party's wave to the secretary of state's office last fall. Will now oversee elections statewide with an increased amount of scrutiny due to his overtly partisan past.

STRATTON-CARPENTER & ASSOCIATES

Public Affairs
Political and Government Relations
Domestic and International Business Consulting

1717 Downing Street, Denver, CO 80218
Phone: 303.377.6992 | Fax: 303.377.1652

www.strattonandassociates.com

Other Democrats

Helen Thorpe

Wife of Gov. Hickenlooper has long been a behind-the-scenes strategist for Democratic causes. A former writer for the *New Yorker* and author of a book on young illegal immigrant women in America, she is regarded as a great communicator.

Frances Koncilja

Southern Colorado native is former head of Colorado Bar Association. Very close with Hickenlooper, having served on many of his boards and commissions in Denver. Led then-mayor's successful campaign urging voter approval of a tax increase to stabilize the city's infrastructure.

Steve Welchert

Political consultant to Democratic U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter is linked to many of the state's unions. Political instinct is widely trusted.

Cole Finegan

Managing partner of the Denver office of the global law firm Hogan Lovells, he once served simultaneously as chief of staff to Hickenlooper and to the Denver city attorney. Specializes in public-private partnerships. Has experience working on the Hill in D.C. and remains politically connected.

Travis Berry/Scott Chase

Political consultants who represent many of the Fortune 500 companies at the state Capitol. Raised more money for the Hickenlooper campaign than any other lobbying firm in Colorado.

Michael Johnston

Time recently rated the state senator one of the top forty people changing America under the age of forty. He has served as an education advisor to President Obama and as an urban charter school principal. The go-to guy on education issues at the state Capitol.

Pat Stryker

Billionaire heiress to family medical products company. Has donated more to Colorado Democratic candidates and progressive causes over the last decade than anyone else.

Dr. Al Yates

Former Colorado State University president who now serves as political advisor to Pat Stryker. Prominent with the national Democracy Alliance and with the Colorado Democracy Alliance.

Paul Weissmann

Former state House majority leader who now serves as chief of staff to the House minority leader and runs the bar at the Blue Parrot, a famed Italian restaurant in Louisville, Colorado, as his day job. He's a hero to liberals throughout the state.

Steve Farber

Lawyer who co-chaired effort to bring 2008 Democratic National Convention to Denver. Has contacts from Denver to D.C. and is as politically connected as anyone in the state.

Norm Brownstein

Founded high-powered law firm, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck with a long-time friend in the late 1960s. Active in Jewish community and with causes and candidates supporting Israel.

Polly Baca

Former head of the Latin American Research and Service Agency, she became Colorado's first Hispanic state senator in 1978 and has been a delegate to twelve straight Democratic National Conventions. Candidates seek her favor and her advice.

Alan Salazar

Top aide to Hickenlooper, has served numerous Colorado Democratic politicians over the last three decades, including Tim Wirth, Gary Hart, Roy Romer and Mark Udall. He knows everybody in Colorado and Washington one needs to know to get things done.

Mark Grueskin

Colorado's best election lawyer, bar none. He has counseled his Democratic clients on federal and state campaign finance law and repeatedly vexed his Republican counterparts in courthouses across the state. Once taught a class for

the Colorado Bar Association and his fellow lawyers on how to help their clients make (legal) political donations outside of traditional fund-raising restrictions.

Christine Scanlan

Former moderate state lawmaker plucked by Gov. Hickenlooper to serve as liaison between his office and the legislature. Respected by both Democrats and Republicans.

Federico Peña

Former Clinton cabinet official and Denver mayor still carries significant cachet among Democrats and Hispanic voters.

Peter Groff

First African-American to run the Colorado state Senate, he now runs the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools out of the nation's capital. Retains significant sway among moderate Democrats back home who valued his leadership and political acumen in maintaining the party's legislative majority.

Kelly Brough

Former Hickenlooper chief of staff when he was mayor of Denver, she now runs the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, the largest business advocacy group in the state. She served as a key spokesperson in the successful fight against three tax reduction measures on the ballot last November that would have dramatically limited government revenues if passed.

Mike Cerbo

Former state representative now runs Colorado chapter of the AFL-CIO.

Mike Huttner

Created ProgressNow, an online grassroots organization that boasts the largest e-mail database of voters in Colorado. Recently left to form own political consulting company after expanding ProgressNow to form chapters in more than a dozen other states.

Megan Van Ens

Colorado native runs the Colorado C3 Roundtable, coordinating the work of

501(c)(3) organizations in the state toward a progressive agenda.

Ellen Golombek

Former national political director of Planned Parenthood chose to return home to Colorado for the 2010 cycle. She runs the state chapter of America Votes and was integral last decade in helping progressive candidates win statewide. Now serving as head of state Department of Labor and Employment under Hickenlooper.

Joan Fitz-Gerald

The first female state Senate president in Colorado history, Fitz-Gerald now lives in Washington, working as the national director of America Votes. She continues to keep up to date with happenings in her adopted home state, consulting with progressive candidates and campaigns.

Jill Hanauer

Runs Project New West, which calls itself the leading authority on the values,

issues and demographics of states like Colorado, Arizona and Nevada. She's the former co-founder of the Interfaith Alliance and a former prodigious fundraiser at the DNC.

Lynne Mason

Runs the political arm of the Colorado Education Association, the largest teachers union in the state.

Ken Salazar

Former U.S. Senator tapped by President Obama to become interior secretary, he still keeps his fingers on the pulse of his home state's politics. Suffered tough loss last fall when his older brother, John, was defeated in his bid to for re-election to Congress. Considered one of the state's shrewdest political minds.

Mike Stratton

Has worked for Democrats from President Bill Clinton to New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson. Guided Salazar's successful 2004 Senate campaign. Now advises Democratic statewide candidates instead of handling day-to-day activities, but he remains involved with every major race.

Jim Carpenter

Former chief of staff to Gov. Bill Ritter. He also worked for Gov. Roy Romer. Joined Stratton this winter to form powerhouse lobbying and election firm, Stratton-Carpenter Associates.

Cary Kennedy

A former state treasurer, Kennedy is seen as one of the brightest minds on the Democratic side, though her political star is a bit faded after she failed to win re-election last November.



The Colorado Education Association is the leading advocate for quality public education and the transformation of our state's education system. We're successful because of people like CEA Political Director Lynne Mason, a Top Influencer in Colorado. Congratulations, Lynne.

Colorado Education Association
coloradoea.org

Andrew Romanoff

Former state House speaker who challenged Sen. Michael Bennet in a Democratic primary last year. Burned some bridges in the process, but remains a tireless advocate for progressive causes. His supporters are among the party's most passionate.

Paul Harstad

Harstad has achieved perhaps the best win-loss record of any Democratic pollster in the country, having won forty-three out of forty-eight statewide general elections for U.S. senator, governor, ballot initiatives and presidential battleground states—all but a handful of them competitive.

Bill Ritter

Outgoing governor pioneered the phrase “new energy economy” and positioned Colorado to take advantage of a renewable fuel boom. Former prosecutor stepped down for personal reasons, choosing not to run for re-election.

Jim Lyons

Denver lawyer with connections to Clinton White House. One of Ritter's prime backers, he remains an asset for Democrats seeking office.

Brandon Shaffer

State Senate president helped recruit and fund-raise to keep the party's majority in the upper chamber. Former Navy officer is seen as potential challenger to newly elected Republican Rep. Cory Gardner in the 4th congressional district.

Tyler Chafee

Up-and-coming political consultant works with Craig Hughes and Rick Ridder at powerful Denver firm, RBI Strategies. Ran Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in Colorado.

Rick Ridder

Co-founded RBI Strategies, which has consulted for six different presidential campaigns. He also works internationally, having helped elect four heads of state overseas.

Hollie Velasquez Horvath

Top Democratic fundraiser. Raised money for candidates at local, state and federal level in Colorado, most recently Gov. Hickenlooper.

Jason Bane

Labor operative co-founded state's most viewed political blog, Colorado-Pols.com. It drives discussions and places odds on candidates. Campaigns have found themselves not only reading it, but giving its bloggers interviews and story tips.

Ed Perlmutter

Democratic congressman from 7th congressional district. Old school, retail politician whose “Government at the Grocery” events often turn into extended give-and-takes. Neighbors love him even if they don't agree with him because he listens to their concerns. Built network of support in Denver suburbs that is the closest thing to a Chicago-style machine in Colorado today.

MISCELLANEOUS

Rick Reiter

Colorado's preeminent political consultant when it comes to statewide ballot measures. His side has won fifteen of the last sixteen initiatives he's worked on; if you want an initiative passed or defeated, his firm is the one to hire.

Dan Hopkins

Former Owens press secretary, the registered independent is the single most respected media rep in the Colorado political world. Technically retired, he tends to work every other year with Reiter on ballot measures, serving as spokesperson for the campaigns.

Roxane White

No one will be closer to the governor than his chief of staff, who is a regis-

tered unaffiliated voter. She has the complete trust of Republicans and Democrats alike from her work with past administrations.

Eric Sonderrmann

A high-profile political pundit, offering regular commentary on public television programs and in newspapers around the state. He's seen as a straight shooter, and candidates know they have problems if he criticizes them.

Floyd Ciruli

The preeminent pollster in Colorado. Serves as political analyst for leading television station and newspaper in Denver. No candidate declares victory or accepts defeat until Ciruli calls the race.

Chris Watney

As the head of the Colorado Children's Campaign, her bipartisan “Kids Caucus” usually gets whatever legislation it wants passed. The former Justice Department spokesperson worked on Democratic campaigns before leaving the field to focus on Colorado children.

Dick Lamm

Former three-term Democratic governor has angered many in his party in recent years with his stand against illegal immigration. He remains a prolific writer, recently focusing on personal and government responsibilities in health-care decades after he was infamously quoted as saying, “Old people have a duty to die.”