



# THE ROCKY Mountaineer

March 2022, Issue 9

## WHAT'S INSIDE:



**DESPITE NATIONAL TRENDS, POLIS RECEIVES HIGH MARKS AND DEMOCRATS RETAIN ADVANTAGE IN CO**



**GANAHL CONTINUES TO FLOP AS GOP FRONTRUNNER, EVEN UNDERPERFORMING NEUSCHWANGER VS. POLIS**



**VOTERS VIEW COLORADO'S ECONOMY POSITIVELY; GOP ATTACKS ON COSTS AND CRIME AREN'T SILVER BULLETS**

# Welcome Back to The Mountaineer

Welcome to *The Mountaineer*, a resource for progressives and a guide for advocates across the state of Colorado, published by Global Strategy Group and ProgressNow Colorado. Research presented in this publication is the result of a survey conducted between February 11 and February 15, 2022 among 800 registered voters in Colorado. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for Colorado voters is +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

This ninth publication will focus on the political landscape, including voters' views on the Governor's race and the parties' handling of major issues facing Colorado.

## In this issue

### 3

#### **VOTERS CONTINUE TO GIVE POLIS HIGH MARKS AND PREFER CO DEMS**



Led by Governor Polis' strong and steady standing, Colorado Democrats have weathered the Omicron wave better than their national counterparts, continue to be well-liked, and have retained their lead on the legislative and governor ballots. Meanwhile, the GOP's decision to lean into their own biggest vulnerabilities leaves their brand damaged and limits their statewide vote potential.

### 4

#### **GANAHL FLOUNDERS AND EVEN UNDERPERFORMS NEUSCHWANGER AGAINST POLIS**



Heidi Ganahl remains nearly totally unknown and is underwater among those who know her. She continues to trail Polis by over 15 points and actually performs worse against the Governor than Danielle Neuschwanger.

### 5

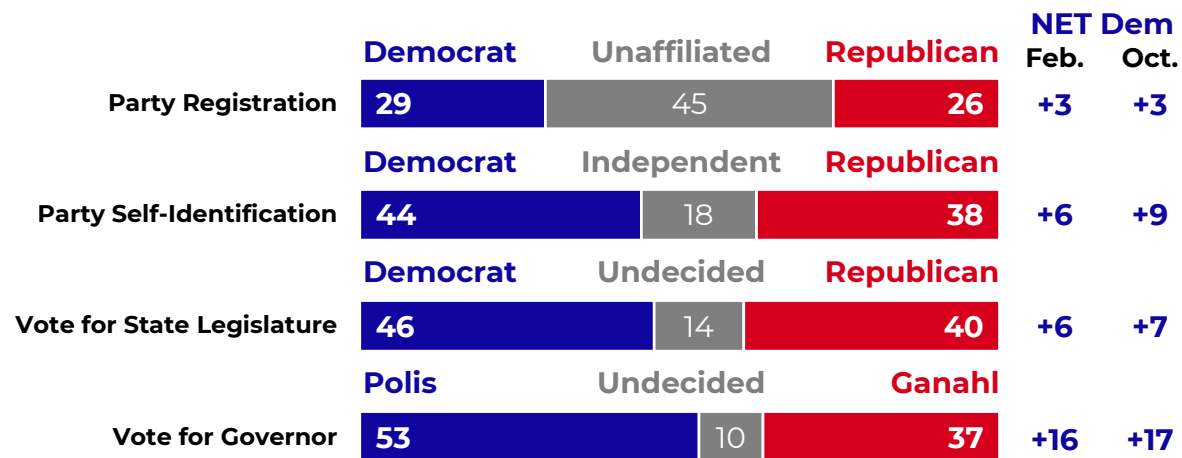
#### **DEMOCRATS CAN FEND OFF GOP ATTACKS ON CRIME AND COSTS WITH RIGHT MESSAGES**



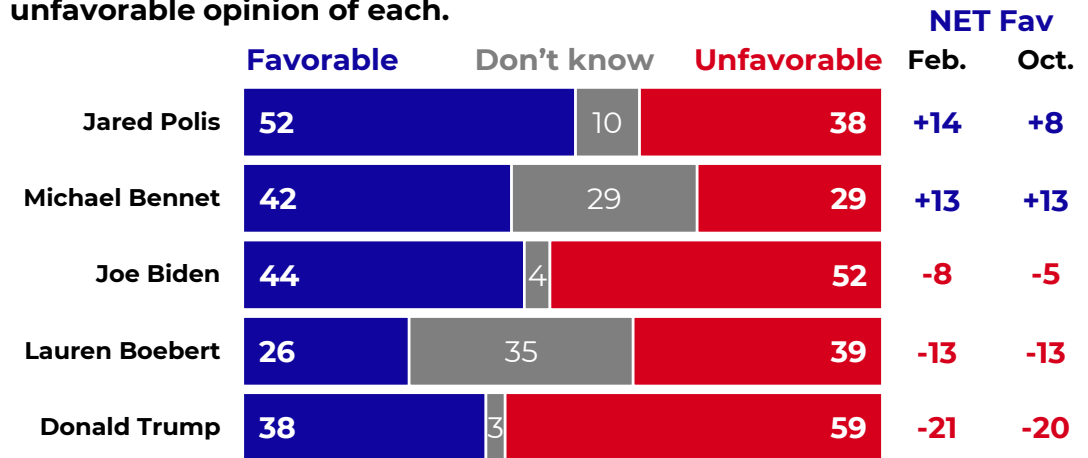
Democrats continue to have solid leads on the issues that are currently the largest drivers of the legislative vote like health care costs and looking out for the middle class. Republicans have modest advantages on public safety and cost of living, but Democrats have messaging that is successful in not only fending off GOP attacks on these issues but also improving the Democratic position.

# Defying national trends, Colorado voters continue to prefer Colorado Democrats to Republicans

Despite the intervening Omicron wave that has damaged President Biden and caused Democrats to lose some ground on the generic ballot at the national level, **the political situation among registered voters in Colorado has remained remarkably stable** since our last survey in October. Democrats' lead on the gubernatorial and legislative ballots have held steady, and, while Biden's personal ratings are underwater, Senator Bennet's and Governor Polis' are well above water, with Polis' actually improving since October.



Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each.



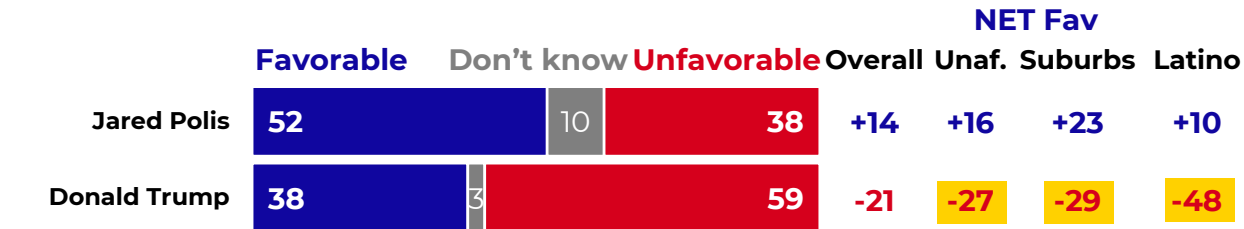
# Republican brand in tatters as they keep serving up unforced errors, resulting in an apparent ceiling around 40% among registered voters

While Governor Polis maintains strong personal standing both overall and among key groups of voters, **Lauren Boebert and, especially, Donald Trump continue to be real albatrosses for their party.** Trump remains intensely unpopular overall, but his standing is even worse with key groups of voters. Perhaps nowhere is the dichotomy more important than in the suburbs, which are so crucial to GOP hopes to turn around their fortunes in the state. **Trump is underwater with suburban voters by 29 points while Polis has a +23 rating with this key group.**

**With these kinds of standard bearers, it's no wonder that Republicans have had a remarkably consistent ceiling of around 40% support over the last two years.** In the six statewide registered voter surveys that The Mountaineer has conducted since its inception in February of 2020, the GOP vote share in the generic ballot has always stayed within a range of 38% to 40%. And in this survey, the GOP share on Party ID and every single ballot is between 37% and 40%.

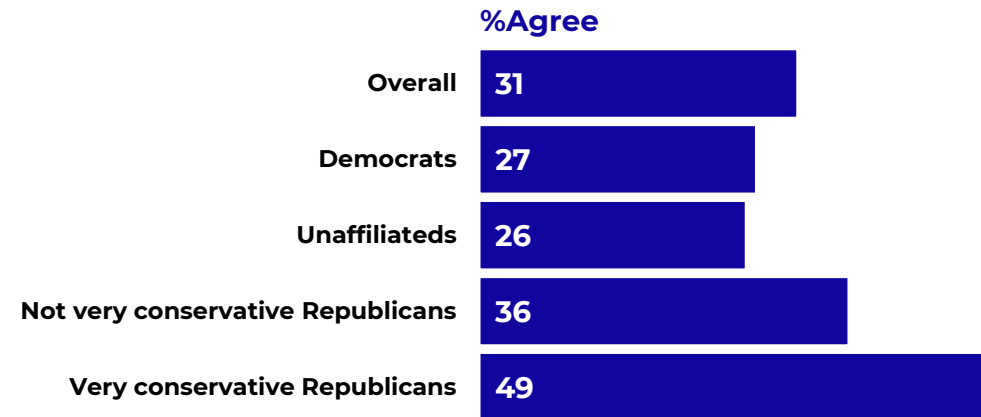
**Meanwhile, Republicans at both the national and state levels keep reinforcing the kind of unpopular stances that will make it difficult for them to break through this ceiling.** Our [last survey](#) showed that Republicans had major vulnerabilities around their support for extreme anti-abortion policies, their support for January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrectionists, and their continued support for conspiracy theorists who insist that Trump won in 2020. Yet, in recent weeks we've seen Colorado Republicans propose an abortion registry, Tina Peters jump into the race for secretary of state (potentially joining insurrectionist Ron Hanks on the November ballot), and the RNC defend the January 6<sup>th</sup> attack on the US capitol as "legitimate political discourse." We released a [report earlier this week](#) that further highlights the GOP's vulnerability on abortion. This survey also finds that that the RNC decision to defend January 6<sup>th</sup> is likely to turn off not only unaffiliateds, but also Republicans who are not very conservative as well.

Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each.



Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

*The events of January 6th at the U.S. capitol were "legitimate political discourse."*



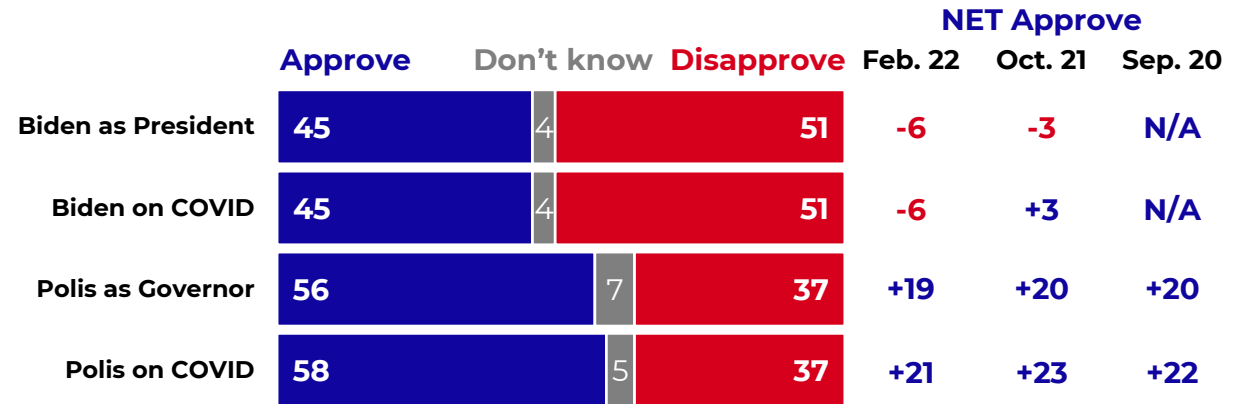
# Polis' job approval and lead over Ganahl remain steady and strong; Ganahl underperforms Neuschwanger

While Polis has solid personal standing, his job rating is even stronger.

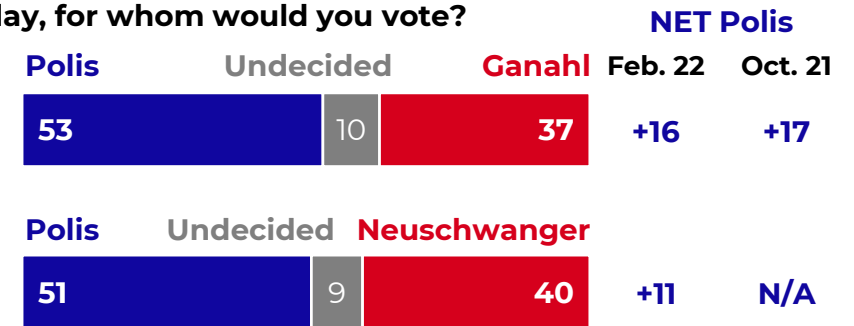
**Moreover, his job approval, both overall and on the coronavirus pandemic, has remained stable, not only since October, but stretching back to September of 2020** – even as President Biden has seen his decline.

Meanwhile, Heidi Ganahl's name ID is mired at a pitiful 20%, and she is underwater among the voters who know her (8% favorable vs. 11% unfavorable). Among unaffiliateds, her favorability is net negative by a more than two-to-one ratio (5% favorable vs. 11% unfavorable). It's no surprise, then, that Polis continues to dominate Ganahl in a head-to-head matchup, holding a 16-point margin.

What is surprising, however, is that **Ganahl is actually polling worse against Polis than far-right extremist Danielle Neuschwanger**, who trails Polis by a smaller, but still hefty, 11-point margin (similar to Polis' margin against Walker Stapleton in 2018).



If the general election for Governor of Colorado were held today, for whom would you vote?



# Colorado voters are relatively bullish about the state's economy, but not the nation's

Governor Polis' handling of the COVID pandemic is one reason he is receiving high marks for his overall job approval. Another reason he is overperforming Biden by such a large margin is the vast disparity in how Colorado voters view the state and national economies. **By a solid 56% to 40% margin, Colorado voters give the state's economy a positive rating, including two-to-one positive ratings among both Democrats and unaffiliateds.** This positive sentiment is also driven by men, college-educated voters, and voters in the Denver metro area. However, voters are much more pessimistic about the state of the U.S. economy, with just over a quarter giving the country's economy a positive rating.

	How would you rate the state of Colorado's economy today?			How would you rate the state of the U.S. economy today?		
	Positive	Negative	NET Positive	Positive	Negative	NET Positive
Overall	56	40	+16	28	71	-43
Democrats	64	32	+32	46	52	-6
Unaffiliateds	63	32	+31	23	76	-53
Republican	41	58	-17	15	85	-70
Men	63	34	+29	31	69	-38
Women	51	46	+5	26	73	-47
Non-college	48	47	+1	22	77	-55
College	68	31	+37	37	63	-26
Denver metro	61	35	+26	32	68	-36
Rest of state	53	45	+8	25	74	-49

# Voters trust Dems more than GOP on the issues that drive the vote – but voters are more split on economic metrics and public safety

When it comes to the issue landscape in Colorado, voters prefer Democrats by sizeable margins on most issues, including the issues that matter most in determining vote choice. A regression analysis revealed that of the issues tested, **the three items that were most correlated with the generic ballot (when controlling for partisan identification and demographics) were “responding to the coronavirus pandemic,” “bringing down the cost of health care and prescription drugs,” and “looking out for working- and middle-class Coloradans.”**

Democrats lead on the first two of those issues by double-digit margins and on the latter by 5 points, with larger leads among unaffiliated voters. They also have large leads when it comes to education and abortion and a massive leave on climate and pollution. Voters are more split when it comes to taxes, the cost of living, and public safety. Republicans have modest, single-digit leads on these issues which have historically been the issues on which they have had their largest advantages.

## Who do you trust more to handle each of the following?

	Democrats in Colorado	Republicans in Colorado	NET Democrats	
			Overall	Unaffiliateds
Reducing air pollution and addressing climate change	57	26	+31	+40
Dealing with the issue of abortion	49	33	+16	+23
<u>Responding to the coronavirus pandemic**</u>	48	35	+13	+16
<u>Bringing down the cost of health care and prescription drugs**</u>	47	35	+12	+17
Improving public education for Colorado’s children	47	37	+10	+14
<u>Looking out for working- and middle-class Coloradans**</u>	45	40	+5	+9
Ensuring Colorado has a fair and effective tax system	40	42	-2	-1
Addressing Colorado’s rising cost of living	37	43	-6	-6
Protecting public safety	39	46	-7	-6

**\*\* and underline indicates that this item was a significant driver of the generic ballot in regression analysis**

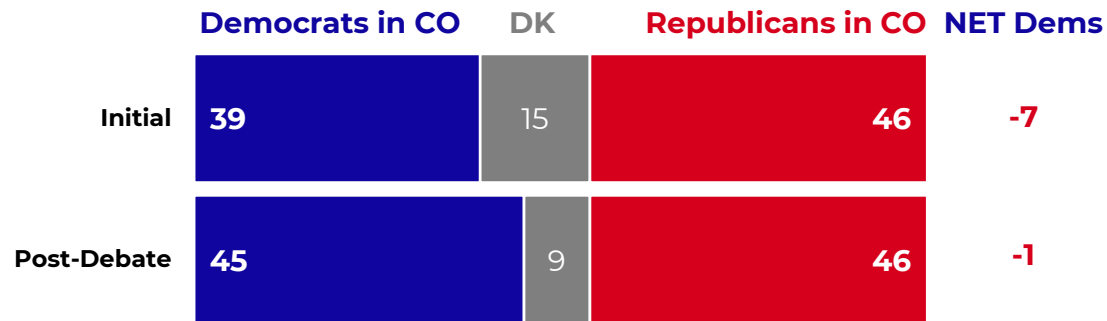
# Cost and crime are no silver bullets for Republicans; debate on the issues improve the Democratic position on each

Republicans have telegraphed that they plan to center their 2022 campaigns around the issues of crime and cost of living. The previous slide shows that this certainly makes sense – those issues are traditionally more pro-Republican turf and that is no different this year. **But if Republicans think that these issues will be silver bullets that overcome Colorado voters’ current inherent preference for Democrats, this survey has bad news for them.**

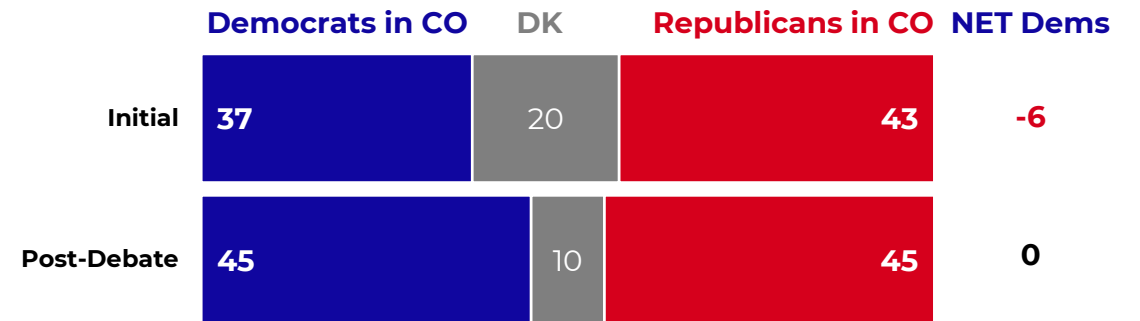
First of all, as noted on the previous slide, a regression analysis shows that – contrary to conventional wisdom – neither crime nor cost of living are particularly strong drivers of the generic legislative ballot right now. This is not to say that these issues are unimportant to voters, rather that **issues which are friendlier to Democrats are more salient to vote choice, at least right now.**

Second of all, Democrats clearly understand where Republicans are headed and are already messaging proactively on these issues – and they have messages that work (see Messaging Appendix). When we exposed voters to the balanced debates outlined below, **the Democratic position on both public safety and cost of living improved from a small disadvantage to a draw.** Given Democrats’ inherent advantage with this electorate and strong position on other issues, fighting these two issues to a draw is a win for the blue team.

Who do you trust more to handle the issue of protecting public safety?



Who do you trust more to handle the issue of addressing Colorado's rising cost of living?





# About The Mountaineer

**Colorado has a long history as a leader in developing and implementing ground-breaking progressive policy, but as the state's leaders continue to build on this progressive tradition, they also face unique challenges that range from the state's TABOR amendment to its rapid growth.**

*The Mountaineer* is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, and responsive tool to help inform the unique political and policy debates in Colorado. By conducting methodologically sound research and providing reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press, *The Mountaineer* will help progressive leaders and communicators shape the debate on the issues that matter most to Coloradans.

## About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 800 registered voters in Colorado between February 11 and February 15, 2022. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level for Colorado voters is +/- 3.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater. The survey was conducted over the phone and online, with online respondents recruited from multiple opt-in online panel vendors. Respondents were verified against a voter file, and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of Colorado's registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables including party registration, race, gender, age, education, region, and population density.

**For press inquiries contact:**

**Andrew Baumann**  
[abaumann@globalstrategygroup.com](mailto:abaumann@globalstrategygroup.com)

**Sara Loflin**  
[sara@progressnowcolorado.org](mailto:sara@progressnowcolorado.org)

# Messaging Appendix

## PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY MESSAGING:

**Democrats** say that the pandemic and economic upheaval of the last few years have put unprecedented stress on our communities, and they are working to make Colorado safer by investing in solutions that prevent crime before it happens – like education, affordable housing, and mental health treatment – while making sure law enforcement have the tools they need to crack down on violent criminals. Meanwhile, instead of working to find solutions, Republicans are playing political games and opposing investments in the things that we know work to prevent crime because they want to protect tax cuts for wealthy Coloradans.

**Republicans** say that Colorado is facing a tsunami of violent crime because Democrats have passed permissive policies that tie the hands of law enforcement and prioritize repeat criminal offenders over families, victims, and public safety. Democrats have reduced penalties for criminals who commit violent felonies like rape and murder and changed possession of fentanyl from a felony to a misdemeanor, putting more criminals on the street and leading to our public places being overrun by addicts and crime. As a result, Colorado’s violent crime rate is growing 11 times faster than the national average.

## ADDRESSING COST OF LIVING MESSAGING:

**Democrats** say that we should cut taxes and fees on working families while asking the wealthiest Coloradans to pay their fair share so that we can invest in programs that will save people money like affordable housing and childcare, lower prescription drug costs, and free full-day pre-K.

**Republicans** say that we should drastically reduce the runaway government spending that is making inflation worse while cutting taxes and fees for all Colorado families so that they have more money in their pockets and on all Colorado businesses so that they can reduce their prices.