

An Effective Strategy for Developing and Implementing a Statewide Initiative to Secure Community Water Fluoridation



Wyatt Hornsby | National Oral Health Conference | April 25, 2017



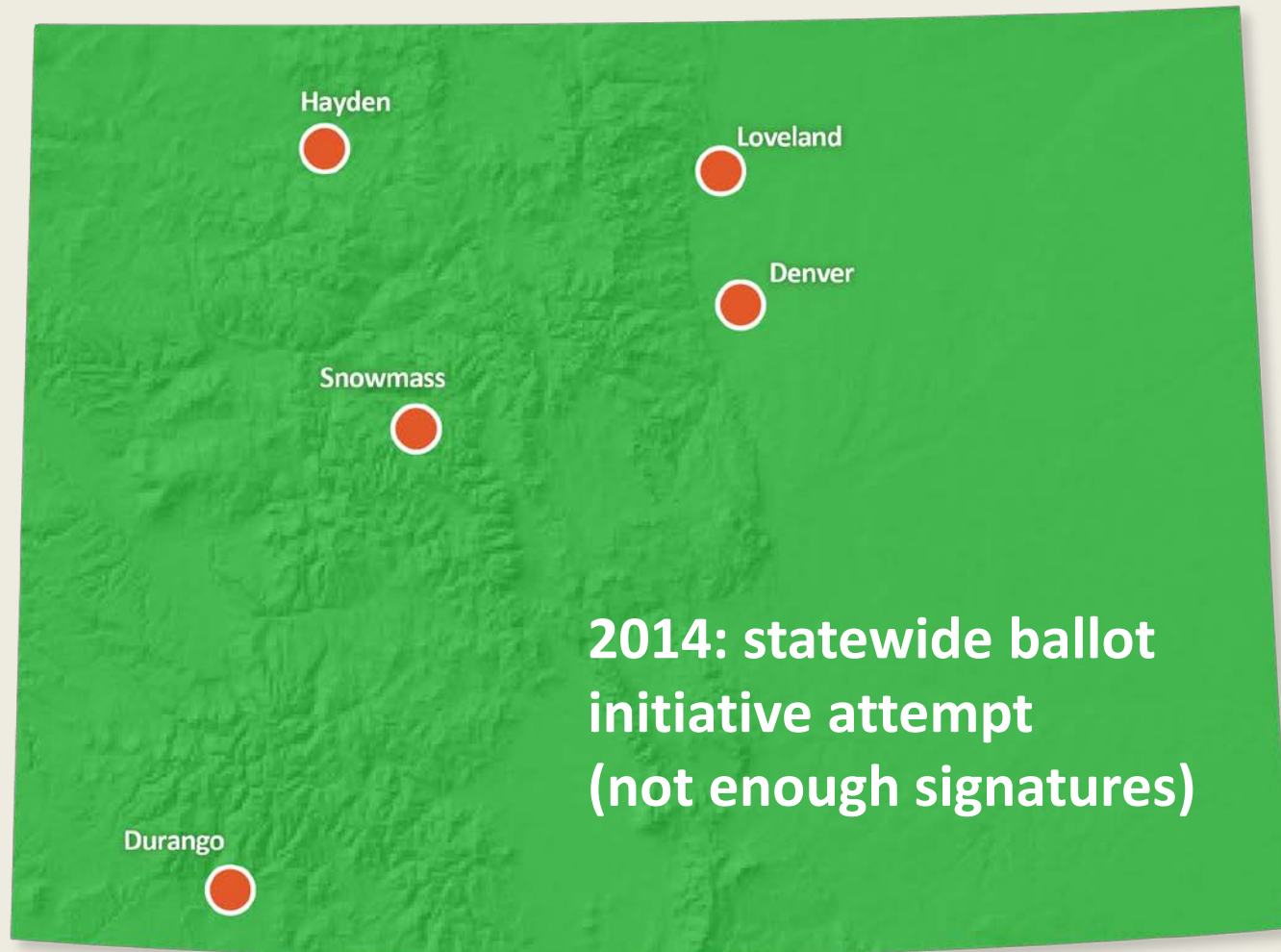
Community Water Fluoridation in Colorado

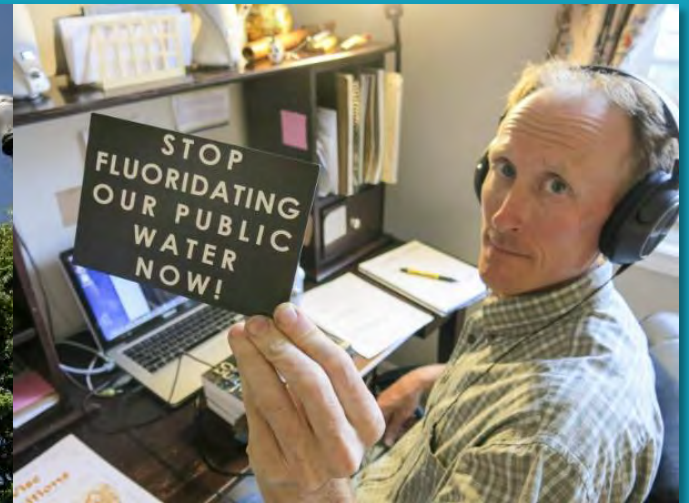
Stats

- 74.91% of Coloradans served by public water systems have access to optimally fluoridated water*
- Largest utility is Denver Water:
1.4 million customers
- Rapid Response Team:
 - Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
 - Colorado Dental Association
 - Healthier Colorado
 - Oral Health Colorado
 - Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation



Rash of Rollback Attempts (2014-2017)





Is there more we can do to broaden support for and secure fluoridation in Colorado?

Photo Sources: Colorado Public Radio: www.cpr.org/news/story/denver-fluoride-fight-pits-activists-against-long-standing-health-policy; Health Impact News: <http://healthimpactnews.com/2014/dallas-city-council-moves-to-stop-water-fluoridation/>; National Public Radio: www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2012/09/12/161003171/portland-ore-becomes-latest-fluoride-battleground

Research

Community Water Fluoridation

Influencer
interviews

- 15 experts
- Broad interests

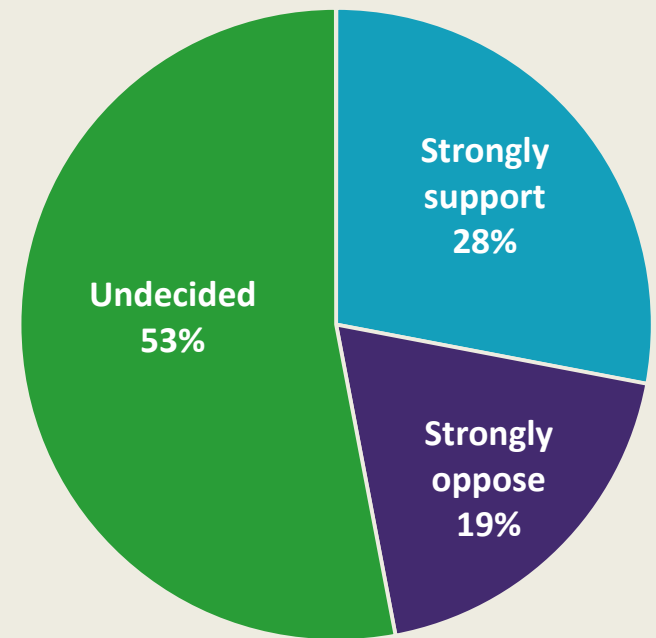
Likely voter
survey

- 510 interviews
- Statewide

What We Learned (In a Nutshell)

Likely Voters

- ½ don't know if their water is fluoridated or not.
- Positive messages more believable than negative.
- Reducing cavities and other oral health benefits drove support for positive message. Being detrimental to health drove support for the negative argument.
- Variety of spokespersons (physicians, dentists, toxicologists) most effective at convincing "fencesitters."



Statewide survey of 510 Coloradoans, June 28-July 7, 2016.
Maximum margin of sampling error: +/- 4.3 percentage points

What We Learned (In a Nutshell)

Experts

- Must broaden support for fluoridation (beyond oral health community).
- Want good info.
- Sheer quantity of opposition messaging overwhelming.
- Opposition wins on passion and emotion.
- Debate plays out in very local way.



Ditch the bogus studies & conspiracy theories.

Get the scoop on why water fluoridation matters.

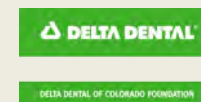
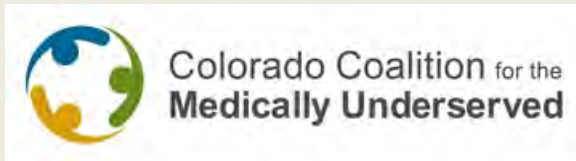
Get the scoop at coloradowaterfluoridation.org

Strategy

Community Water Fluoridation



Statewide Network



Messaging and Communications

It's About Values

- Local pride.
- Responsibility to care for one's family.
- Fairness and equity.



Communications



DELTA DENTAL OF COLORADO FOUNDATION



Durango

Recent win

- Local pro-fluoridation campaign supported by statewide network.
- “Clean Water Durango” vs. “Healthy Kids Healthy Durango.”
- Key endorsements (e.g., school board).
- Targeted social media.
- Flood of letters-to-the-editor.
- VICTORY!

Source: Durango Herald: www.durangoherald.com/articles/127206-voters-likely-to-decide-whether-to-halt-fluoridation-of-drinking-water.

THE DURANGO HERALD

Since 1881

Local news

City of Durango to continue fluoridation program



Final election results show voters heavily support water treatment



The city of Durango will continue to fluoridate its water, with final election results showing the ordinance that aimed to stop the program failed overwhelmingly.

Related Stories

Youssef, Brookie, Bettin win seats on City Council

Election totals showed about 1,735 people voted for an ordinance that would require the city to stop adding fluoride to its water system, far behind the some 3,094 voters who supported keeping the system in place.

Takeaways

Defusing the Opposition

- Focus on “persuadables.”
- Don’t take the bait. Don’t get drawn into lengthy, detailed debates.
- Bring it all back to your message.
- Connect CWF to community values.
- Bring out most credible spokespeople.
- Don’t repeat myths verbatim.



Did you know?

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral
found in rivers, lakes, oceans and wells throughout Colorado.
Find out more about how it helps communities.

coloradowaterfluoridation.org

Special Thanks

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Campaign for Dental Health
- Colorado Dental Association
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Healthier Colorado
- Resource Media
- Network partners

Teachers, community leaders,
pediatricians, and dentists agree

Community water fluoridation **protects kids
for life** and keeps Coloradans healthy!

coloradowaterfluoridation.org

Thank you

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