

**SUPREME COURT, STATE OF COLORADO**

2 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Denver, Colorado 80203

Original Proceeding Pursuant to Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-40-107(2), C.R.S. (2019-2020)  
Appeal from the Ballot Title Board

In the Matter of the Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for Proposed Initiative 2019-2020 #293 (“Tobacco Tax Revenue for New State Preschool Program”)

**Petitioners:** ANNA JO HAYNES,

v.

**Respondents:** MONICA VONDRUSKA and JON CALDARA,

and

**Title Board:** THERESA CONLEY, DAVID POWELL, and JASON GELENDER.

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Benjamin J. Larson, #42540  
William A. Hobbs, #7753  
IRELAND STAPLETON PRYOR & PASCOE, PC  
717 17th Street, Suite 2800  
Denver, Colorado 80202  
Telephone: 303-623-2700  
Facsimile: 303-623-2062  
E-mail: blarson@irelandstapleton.com  
bhobbs@irelandstapleton.com

Supreme Court Case No.:  
2020SA136

**RESPONDENTS’ OPENING BRIEF**

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I hereby certify that this brief complies with all requirements of C.A.R. 28 or C.A.R. 28.1, and C.A.R. 32, including all formatting requirements set forth in these rules. Specifically, the undersigned certifies that:

The brief complies with the applicable word limits set forth in C.A.R. 28(g) because it contains 3,176 words.

The brief complies with the standard of review requirements set forth in C.A.R. 28(a)(7)(A), because it contains under a separate heading before the discussion of the issue, as applicable, a concise statement: (1) of the applicable standard of appellate review with citation to authority; and (2) whether the issue was preserved, and if preserved, the precise location in the record where the issue was raised and where the court ruled, not to an entire document.

I acknowledge that my brief may be stricken if it fails to comply with any of the requirements of C.A.R. 28 or 28.1, and C.A.R. 32.

By: /s/ Benjamin J. Larson  
Benjamin J. Larson, #42540

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Respondents Monica Vondruska and Jon Caldara (“Proponents”), registered electors of the State of Colorado and the designated representatives of the proponents of Initiative 2019-2020 #293 (“Initiative #293”), through counsel, IRELAND STAPLETON PRYOR & PASCOE, PC, respectfully submit their Opening Brief in support of the title, ballot title, and submission clause (the “Title(s)”) set by the Title Board for Initiative #293.<sup>1</sup>

### **STATEMENT OF ISSUES PRESENTED FOR REVIEW**

1. Whether the Title Board clearly erred in finding that Initiative #293 contains a single subject when Initiative #293 funds a new preschool program by reallocating certain state revenues from tobacco and nicotine products.

2. Whether the Title Board clearly erred when the Titles succinctly and accurately describe that the new preschool program is funded by reallocating state revenues from tobacco and nicotine products and, for the sake of brevity, do not identify each specific revenue reallocation, including the reallocation of the portion of state cigarette tax revenues that would otherwise be distributed to local governments that ban tobacco and nicotine products.

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<sup>1</sup> Objector’s caption to the Petition for Review lists Julie Pelegrin as one of the Title Board members. However, Jason Gelender, not Ms. Pelegrin, heard Initiative #293, which is reflected in the caption of Proponents’ Opening Brief.

3. Whether the Title Board clearly erred when the Titles succinctly and accurately describe that tobacco and nicotine revenues are reallocated from “health-related programs” and, for the sake of brevity, do not identify all the specific health-related programs from which funds are reallocated.

## STATEMENT OF CASE

### **I. Nature of the Case and Proceedings before the Title Board.**

This is an original proceeding pursuant to section 1-40-107(2), C.R.S. of the title setting for Initiative #293. Proponents filed Initiative #293 with the Secretary of State on March 18, 2020. R., p. 2.<sup>2</sup> The Title Board, on behalf of the Secretary of State, held a title hearing on April 1, 2020, unanimously finding that Initiative #293 contains a single subject and setting the Titles. R., p. 20.

Petitioner Anna Jo Haynes (“Objector”) filed a motion for rehearing (“Motion for Rehearing”), raising two arguments as to why Initiative #293 purportedly contains more than one subject and several other arguments concerning the Titles set by the Title Board. *See* R., pp. 21-25. The rehearing was held on April 15, 2020, at which the Title Board unanimously denied Objector’s Motion for Rehearing. R.,

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<sup>2</sup> Citations to the Title Board Record are to the certified copy of the Title Board Record submitted with the Petition. Because the Title Board Record is not paginated, page number references are to the electronic page number.

p. 26. On April 22, 2020, Objector petitioned this Court pursuant to section 1-40-107(2), C.R.S., seeking review of only one of the single subject issues and two of the clear-title issues raised below. Petition for Review at 4.

## **II. Statement of Relevant Facts.**

Initiative #293 is a straightforward measure that funds a new preschool program without raising taxes by reallocating state revenues from tobacco and nicotine products, while continuing to fund tobacco education, cessation, and prevention programs where needed. *Id.* at Proposed Colo. Const. art. X, § 22(1)-(4). As set forth in Initiative #293's legislative declaration, there have been significant improvements in the regulation of tobacco and nicotine products such that tobacco smoking levels are at all-time lows. R., p. 2, Proposed Colo. Const. art. X, § 22(1)-(3). Consequently, Proponents believe that the State of Colorado would be well served by taking tobacco and nicotine tax revenues from certain existing health-related programs and devoting them to preschool programming.

To accomplish this goal, Initiative #293 amends the Colorado Constitution by adding a new section 22 in article X that directs the creation of the preschool program and reallocates existing constitutional tobacco taxes imposed by section 21 of article X. R., p. 2, Proposed Colo. Const. art. X, § 22(1)-(4). Initiative #293 also amends Colorado statutes to reallocate state revenues from other tobacco and nicotine-

related sources. For instance, Initiative #293 reallocates revenues received from the state's Master Settlement Agreement with tobacco manufacturers. *See R.*, pp. 3-5, Proposed C.R.S. § 24-75-1104.5(1.7).

Additionally, Initiative #293 reallocates revenues from the state's statutory tax on cigarettes. Under current law, 27.5% of the state cigarette tax is apportioned and distributed to local governments by a formula provided in the statute. § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S. Initiative #293 reallocates the state cigarette tax revenue (known as cigarette tax rebates) that would otherwise go to local governments that enact a ban on tobacco and nicotine products by crediting those revenues to the new preschool program. *R.*, pp. 5-6, Proposed § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S.

As identified and described in the Initial Fiscal Impact Statement, several existing state health-related programs will be affected by the reallocation of various tobacco and nicotine-related funding sources. *R.*, pp. 27-29, Initial Fiscal Impact Statement at 1-3 (identifying ten health-related programs from which funds will be reallocated).

After careful consideration, the Title Board elected not to burden voters with lengthy and cumbersome Titles that identify all the tobacco and nicotine-related revenue sources from which funds are reallocated and the various programs affected

by the reallocation.<sup>3</sup> R., p. 26 (denying Objector’s Motion for Rehearing). Instead, the Title Board determined that these implementing details are properly left to the Blue Book. Accordingly, the Title Board succinctly and accurately set the Titles as follows:

An amendment to the Colorado constitution and a change to the Colorado Revised Statu[t]es concerning a new preschool program that is funded by reallocating revenue generated by existing state taxes on tobacco and nicotine products, and, in connection therewith, requiring the state to create and administer the new preschool program, which must supplement existing preschool programs and funding, and reallocating from certain health-related programs and other state purposes portions of the following existing revenue sources: 1) taxes on tobacco and nicotine products; and 2) money the state receives from tobacco litigation settlements.<sup>4</sup>

R., p. 26.

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<sup>3</sup> The Title Board spent nearly two hours during the initial hearing and rehearing crafting the Titles for Initiative #293. Hearing Before Title Board on Proposed Initiative 2019-2020 #293 (April 1, 2020, *available at: [https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=1&clip\\_id=159](https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=159)* (discussion from 2:18:20-3:49:45); Rehearing Before the Title Board on Proposed Initiative 2019-2020 #293 (April 15, 2020), *available at [https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=1&clip\\_id=165](https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=165)* (discussion from 2:56:58-3:14:54).

<sup>4</sup> There is typographical error in the Titles. The word “Statutes” is spelled as “Statues”. Proponents’ counsel has alerted the Secretary of State’s office to the error.

## **SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT**

With her first issue on appeal, Objector contends that the reallocation of state cigarette tax revenues that would otherwise go to local governments that enact a ban on tobacco and nicotine products constitutes a second subject. However, this banning reallocation provision is directly related to the new preschool program because it establishes another revenue source through the reallocation of tobacco-related tax revenues. While Objector disputes the “justification” for such a provision, the merits of Initiative #293 are not relevant to the single subject inquiry.

With her second issue on appeal, Objector contends the Title Board erred by not describing the banning reallocation provision in the Titles. However, the banning reallocation provision is not a central feature of Initiative #293. Rather, it is an implementing provision aimed at preserving funding for the new preschool program and is simply one of several available revenue sources created by reallocating tobacco-related tax revenues. All of Initiative #293’s revenue reallocation provisions, including the banning reallocation provision, are succinctly and accurately described in the Titles.

With her third argument on appeal, Objector contends that the Title Board erred because—of the various health-related programs affected by reallocation—the Titles do not identify three programs arbitrarily handpicked by Objector below.

However, the Title Board was well within its discretion in reasoning that identifying all affected programs was unwieldy and unnecessary. The Title Board properly balanced clarity and brevity in developing a concise and accurate summary that unambiguously alerts voters that state tobacco and nicotine revenues will be reallocated from existing health-related programs.

## **ARGUMENT**

### **I. Initiative #293 Contains a Single Subject.**

#### **A. Standard of Review; Preservation of Issues on Appeal.**

In reviewing the Title Board’s decision on single subject, the Court “employ[s] all legitimate presumptions in favor of the propriety of the Title Board’s actions.” *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for 2013-2014* #89, 328 P.3d 172, 176 (Colo. 2014) (quoting *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for 2009-2010* #45, 234 P.3d 642, 645 (Colo. 2010)). Consequently, the Court “liberally construe[s] the single subject requirement and ‘only overturn[s] the Title Board’s finding that an initiative contains a single subject in a clear case.’” *Id.* (quoting *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for 2011-2012* #3, 274 P.3d

562, 565 (Colo. 2012); *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for Proposed Initiative 1996 #6*, 917 P.2d 1277, 1280 (Colo. 1996)).

In addition to this deferential standard, the Court’s review of the Title Board’s single subject decision is limited to the narrow inquiry of the “plain language of the initiative to determine whether it comports with the [single subject requirement].” *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 176 (citing *In re 2011-2012 #3*, 274 P.3d at 565). The Court does not consider the initiative’s merits and does not review its “efficacy, construction, or future application.” *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 176 (internal quotation omitted).

With respect to preservation of this issue on appeal, Proponents agree that Objector preserved the single-subject argument concerning the banning reallocation provision.

**B. All of Initiative #293’s Provisions, Including the Banning Reallocation Provision, Relate to the Reallocation of Tobacco and Nicotine-Related Revenues to Fund the New Preschool Program.**

A proposed initiative comports with the single subject requirement of Article V, section 1(5.5) of the Colorado Constitution “if the initiative tends to effect or to carry out one general object or purpose.” *In 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 177. “An initiative meets this requirement as long as the subject matter of the initiative is necessarily or properly connected. Stated differently, so long as an initiative

encompasses *related* matters it does not violate the single subject requirement.” *Id.* (internal citations and quotations omitted) (emphasis in original).

Here, the single subject of Initiative #293 is the funding of a new state preschool program by reallocating state revenues generated from tobacco and nicotine products. All of Initiative #293’s provisions, including the banning reallocation provision, relate to its single subject. The banning reallocation provision concerns what are known as “cigarette tax rebates” that local governments receive from the state for state cigarette taxes that are collected locally. *See* § 39-22-623(1), C.R.S. Specifically, Colorado statute provides that 27.5% of the state cigarette tax is apportioned and redistributed to local governments by a formula provided in the statute. § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S.

Initiative #293 provides that, if a local government enacts a ban on tobacco and nicotine products (and as a result does not collect cigarette tax revenues), the portion of state cigarette tax revenues that would otherwise go to the local government are reallocated to the new preschool program. R., pp. 4-5, Proposed § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S. This provision is therefore directly related to the new preschool program because it establishes another revenue source through the reallocation of tobacco tax revenues.

In attacking this provision as a second subject, Objector mischaracterizes this provision as a “financial penalty” rather than a funding source for the new preschool program. In addition, Objector amorphously argued below that there is no “internal justification” for reallocating revenues from banning jurisdictions and directing those revenues to the new preschool program. R., p. 22. However, the single subject inquiry does not consider the merits of a proposed initiative or review its “efficacy, construction, or future application.” *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 176. Objector’s policy argument about whether this provision is justified is irrelevant to the single subject inquiry and should be ignored.

**II. The Titles Succinctly and Accurately Describe Initiative #293’s Central Features in a Manner that Voters Can Easily Understand.**

**A. Standard of Review; Preservation of Issues on Appeal.**

“The Title Board is vested with considerable discretion in setting the title and the ballot title and submission clause.” *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2015-2016 #156*, 2016 CO 56, ¶ 8. Accordingly, the Court “employ[s] all legitimate presumptions in favor of the propriety of the Title Board’s actions.” *Id.* Thus, the Court will “only reverse the Title Board’s decision if the titles are ‘insufficient, unfair, or misleading.’” *Id.* (quoting *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 176) To make this determination, the Court “employ[s] the general rules of statutory construction and accord[s] the language of the proposed . . . titles their plain

meaning.” *Id.* The Court’s role is “not to consider the merits, efficacy, construction, or future application of a proposed initiative, but instead to determine whether the Title Board fulfilled its duty of ensuring that the [titles] meet constitutional requirements.” *Id.*

Proponents agree that the two clear-title issues raised by Objector were preserved below. Each is addressed in turn.

**B. The Proposed Reallocation of Tax Revenues that Would Otherwise Be Distributed to Local Governments that Enact Bans Is Not a Central Feature.**

The Title Board’s job in setting titles is “to capture, in short form, the proposal in plain, understandable, accurate language enabling informed voter choice in pursuit of the initiative rights of Colorado citizens.” *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 1999-2000 #29*, 972 P.2d 257, 266 (Colo. 1999). While titles must be “fair, clear, accurate, and complete,” they need not set out every detail of the initiative. *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause Summary for 2005-2006 #73*, 135 P.3d 736, 740 (Colo. 2006). Rather, section 1-40-106 (3)(b), C.R.S requires that ballot titles be brief. Therefore, the Title Board “often cannot describe every feature of a proposed initiative in a title or ballot title and submission clause and simultaneously heed the mandate that such documents be concise.” *In re Title,*

*Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 1997-98 #62, 961 P.2d 1077, 1083 (Colo. 1998).*

Here, the banning reallocation provision is an implementing provision aimed at preserving funding for the new preschool program and is simply one of several available revenue sources created by reallocating tobacco-related tax revenues. All of Initiative #293's tax reallocation provisions, including the banning reallocation provision, are succinctly and accurately described in the Titles in the following clause: "requiring the state to create and administer the new preschool program . . . by reallocating from certain health-related programs and other state purposes portions of the following existing revenue sources: 1) taxes on tobacco and nicotine products." R., p. 20.

If voters want to further understand precisely how Initiative #293 proposes to reallocate the web of existing tobacco-related revenues, they are free to explore that in the ballot information booklet, i.e., the Blue Book. Accordingly, after careful consideration, the Title Board correctly determined that the additional length that would be needed to explain the banning reallocation provision is unwarranted here, particularly considering that this provision is prospective and would reallocate tax revenues only if local governments pass new laws banning tobacco or nicotine products. R., p. 5, Proposed § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S. (reallocating cigarette

tax revenue that would have been allocated to local governments “but for the adoption of a ban on or after December 31, 2021” and prohibiting the “enacting of bans” in order to qualify for distributions) (emphasis added).

In attempting to frame the banning reallocation provision as a central feature, Objector misconstrued Initiative #293 by making specious arguments that any regulation of tobacco sales, such as the prohibition of cigarette sales from vending machines, would subject local governments to losing their revenue distributions. R., p. 22, Mot. for Rehearing at 3. The Court should reject Objector’s speculation as to the future application of Initiative #293 because such speculation cannot serve as the basis for a clear-title challenge. *In re 2015-2016 #156*, 2016 CO 56, ¶ 8. Regardless, Objector’s position on the future application of Initiative #293 is incorrect because the provision in question applies to “bans,” not to any form of regulation as Objector contended below. R., p. 5, Proposed § 39-22-623(1)(a)(II)(A), C.R.S.; R., p. 22, Mot. for Rehearing at 3.

In sum, the Title Board was well within its considerable discretion in electing not to describe the banning allocation provision in the Titles.

**C. The Titles Succinctly and Fairly Describe that Initiative #293  
Reallocates Revenue from Health-Related Programs.**

State revenues from tobacco and nicotine-related products are used to fund various existing state health-related programs. *See* R., p. 27, Initial Fiscal Impact

Statement at 1. While Initiative #293 continues to fund some of the existing programs that already receive funding from tobacco and nicotine-related sources, it reallocates funding from other programs in order to fund the new preschool program. *See id.* (identifying ten programs that will be affected by the reallocation of revenues to the preschool program).

At the initial hearing on Initiative #293, the Title Board deliberated at length as to how to accurately and succinctly summarize the programs from which revenues will be reallocated and the source of those funds.<sup>5</sup> The Title Board developed a description that is concise and accurate, and unambiguously alerts voters that state revenues from tobacco and nicotine products will be reallocated from certain “health-related programs.” R., p. 20. As the Title Board reasoned, because several different health-related programs will be impacted, identifying each of them would be unwieldy and unnecessary. Voters can look to the Blue Book to identify the specific programs impacted, the nature of those programs, and how they will be impacted.

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<sup>5</sup> The Title Board spent more than an hour and a half discussing and setting the Titles at the initial hearing. Hearing Before Title Board on Proposed Initiative 2019-2020 #293 (April 1, 2020, available at: [https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=1&clip\\_id=159](https://csos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=159) (discussion from 2:18:20-3:49:45)).

Objector's proposal below to identify only three specific programs handpicked by Objector was unworkable and properly rejected by the Title Board. R., pp. 23-24, Mot. for Rehearing at Argument II.B.6. Objector's proposal fixated on one of four revenue sources addressed by Initiative #293, i.e., the tobacco settlement funds, and then arbitrarily proposed a threshold of 5% of total settlement monies to land on three programs that Objector contended were worthy of identification. *See id.* Objector's proposal failed to consider the total budget of those programs, the percentage of their budgets that comes from tobacco settlement funds, or the availability of other sources of revenue for those programs. *See id.* In essence, Objector asked the Title Board to speculate as to the alleged "significant" effect that Initiative #293 would have on these specific programs in hopes that voters would do so to.

Objector's proposal would paint an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the various programs and revenue sources from which Initiative #293 reallocates funds. Accordingly, the Title Board was well within its broad discretion in determining that a succinct summary is better suited for the Titles here. The Court should reject Objector's request to identify only certain handpicked programs that further Objector's political goals.

## CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, Proponents respectfully request that the Court deny the Petition and affirm the Title Board's title setting for Initiative #293.

Respectfully submitted this 6<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020.

IRELAND STAPLETON PRYOR & PASCOE, PC

/s/ Benjamin J. Larson

Benjamin J. Larson, #42540

William A. Hobbs, #7753

**ATTORNEYS FOR**

**PROponents/RESPONDENTS**

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 6<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020, a true and correct copy of the foregoing **RESPONDENTS' OPENING BRIEF** was duly filed with the Court and served via CCEF upon the following:

Mark G. Grueskin, #14621  
RECHT KORNFELD, P.C.  
1600 Stout Street, Suite 1400  
Denver, CO 80202  
*Attorneys for Petitioners*

Michael Kotlarczyk  
Office of the Attorney General  
1300 Broadway, 6th Floor  
Denver, CO 80203  
*Attorneys for Title Board*

*/s/ Hannah N. Pick*

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Hannah N. Pick