

**DOES ONE SIZE FIT ALL? *AN ANALYSIS OF*
TAX AND EXPENDITURE LIMITATIONS
*IN COLORADO***

By

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ABSTRACT

This analysis evaluates three tax and expenditure limitation (TEL) policies in Colorado: the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights (TABOR), the Statewide Limitation on Property Tax Revenue (SLPTR), and the Gallagher Amendment (GA). It extends previous research in two novel ways. First, it enables analysis of overlapping policies while incorporating county-specific characteristics by abstracting away from specific policies. Rather, the focus rests on the impacts of these policies on property tax levies. Second, it incorporates spatial dependency to account for overlapping populations and economic activity. Within this framework, the revenue and expenditure implications of TEL policies are evaluated, and TELs are found to have material impacts in both cases. TELs are associated with depressed revenues and measurable changes in expenditure behavior. With this context, the final empirical section evaluates the drivers of successful "DeBrucing" efforts, in which localities are able to exempt themselves from components of TABOR and SLPTR. The analysis demonstrates that socioeconomic factors are the dominant determinant of voting outcomes.

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My journey through the doctoral process, to which my wife can attest, has been a lengthy enterprise. The length of this process is, in large part, a consequence of having held multiple jobs during this time. Indeed, my tenures with American University, DC's Office of Revenue Analysis, and the Congressional Budget Office have all made their imprint on this work. However, what such an approach has cost me in terms of duration has been, in my estimation, more than offset by the quality of the folks that have touched my life along the way. In truth, this work is a reflection of not only my personal knowledge and growth, but also of the experiences I have collected by way of my interactions with family, friends, colleagues, professional superiors, and colleagues. I cannot practically identify them all here, but I can accomodate the highlights. I will break with tradition and first mention the single most important person, my wife. Without her patience and understanding, or lack thereof in some situations, I would never have made it through to the end. Both poles proved essential, for the world is not made of gumdrops and unicorns. Her perserverence is a testament to her character, and a reminder of why I am a lucky man. My parents, in addition to their unassailable support, have provided the incredibly durable gift of making good decisions on behalf of my brother and me. They put us first, and in so doing, provided me with the necessary tools to undertake this task. My brother, though it took me a long time to realize it, gave me an enduring reason to stay curious and focused on trying to leave the world more informed than I found it. He once called me his teacher, which blew me away. Sometimes I wonder if he knows how much he has taught me. Of course, I am quite grateful to my committee, consisting of Rene Aubourg, Jocelyn Johnston, John Mikesell, and Dan Mullins. Each of them assisted me through the uncharted waters of this dissertation. Dan Mullins, my chair, has been of particular importance: he has been my technical guide since long before the dissertation germinated into something tractable. But, more than that, beyond the equations and concepts, he has imparted knowledge about what it means to be a scholar. It is not a task, it is a mindset and lifestyle. Most importantly, this is just the beginning.