

= John Kefalas =

John Michael Kefalas ( born December 26 , 1954 ) is a legislator in the U.S. state of Colorado . An educator and lobbyist before first running for the legislature in 2004 , Kefalas defeated a Republican incumbent to win election to the Colorado House of Representatives as a Democrat in 2006 . Kefalas won election to the State Senate in 2012 and he now represents Senate District 14 . In the legislature , Kefalas has focused primarily on health care and poverty issues .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life , education , and career = = =

Born in Piraeus , Greece , Kefalas earned a bachelor 's degree in botany from Colorado State University in 1978 and then joined the Peace Corps in 1979 , serving as an agricultural extension worker in El Salvador . After returning to the United States , he earned a master 's degree in teaching , with a secondary science specialization from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1982 and taught in the Poudre School District . He has also worked as an employment counselor for Larimer County , Colorado , and as a health outreach worker .

= = = Public service and volunteerism = = =

From 1997 to 2004 , Kefalas worked as a public policy advocate and community development coordinator for Catholic Charities until his departure amidst a controversy regarding his public support for Roe v. Wade and abortion rights during his 2004 legislative campaign . Before entering the legislature , he directed the Colorado Progressive Coalition 's Tax Fairness Project . He has served as a member of the Fort Collins Housing Authority and the Colorado Social Legislation Committee , and , in 2001 , won the City of Fort Collins Human Relations Award .

From 1980 to 1994 , Kefalas redirected a portion of his federal income taxes to charitable organizations as a protest against United States military actions in Central America . He has paid his income taxes in full since 1994 , but continued to boycott the federal telephone excise tax as recently as 2004 . As a result , Kefalas has had a lien filed him and has had wages garnished . Kefalas has paid his back taxes and considers his actions to be a conscientious protest . He has also written about his experience of " war tax resistance " for the newsletter of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee . In both his 2004 and 2006 legislative campaigns , Kefalas was accused of avoiding his federal tax obligation , both by his Republican opponent and by independent political committees . Kefalas has also been an outspoken opponent of the Iraq War , and has engaged in non @-@ violent civil disobedience in protest of the war .

Kefalas is married ; he and his wife Beth have two sons ? Harlan , an active @-@ duty U.S. Army soldier who has served in Iraq , Kosovo , and Afghanistan , and Timothy , the coach of the Colorado State University ultimate frisbee team .

= = Legislative career = =

= = = 2004 and 2006 campaigns = = =

Kefalas first ran for the state legislature in 2004 , winning the Democratic Party primary by only seven votes over Fort Collins councilman Bill Bertschy after a recount process that lasted for several weeks . Kefalas lost the general election by fewer than 500 votes to incumbent Republican Bob McCluskey in a race that also included Libertarian Party candidate Jassen Bowman . Kefalas ran unchallenged for the Democratic nomination in 2006 , and narrowly prevailed over McCluskey in the general election .

= = = 2007 legislative session = = =

In the 2007 @-@ 2008 session of the Colorado General Assembly , Kefalas sat on the House Finance Committee and the House Health and Human Services Committee .

While in the legislature , he sponsored successful bills to encourage state purchasing of " environmentally preferable " products , to allow Colorado State University to require graduate student health insurance , and to create licensing standards for hemodialysis technicians .

Kefalas proposed a bill to explore alternative voting systems , which was defeated in committee , but which led to the creation of an 11 @-@ member multi @-@ partisan task force to study related issues . Another of Kefalas ' proposed bills , which would have required the Colorado Department of Revenue to regularly report on tax burdens across individual income groups , was also defeated in committee .

During his first year in the legislature , Kefalas also founded the bipartisan Common Good Caucus to address poverty issues , and was a member of the Hispanic Caucus and the Diabetes / Obesity Caucus .

= = = 2008 legislative session = = =

In the 2008 session of the Colorado General Assembly , Kefalas sat on the House Finance Committee and the House Health and Human Services Committee . Representative Kefalas was joined by chief of staff Anne Bellows , a legal and civil rights expert . For the 2008 legislative session , Kefalas worked with other Fort Collins legislators , particularly Rep. Randy Fischer , on bills to increase scrutiny of proposed uranium mining operations . While one bill , which would require that groundwater quality be restored following mining operations , passed the state legislature and was signed into law , another measure , which would have created stronger public disclosure requirements for mining operations , was killed in committee , but later revived in the state senate .

With Sen. Ron Tupa , Kefalas was the house sponsor of legislation designed to reduce the cost of college textbooks by requiring textbook publishers to disclose costs and offer textbooks unbundled from additional materials , and he sponsored legislation to allow outpatient surgery centers to establish peer review committees ; both bills were signed into law by Gov. Ritter . For his support of ambulatory surgical centers , Kefalas was awarded the Legislator of the Year Award by the Colorado Ambulatory Surgery Center Association later that year .

Kefalas also sponsored a bill to authorize local pilot tests of ranked choice voting methods . Kefalas sponsored a bill to establish a Colorado Housing Investment Fund , but withdrew the bill when proponents moved forward with a similar ballot initiative . He later expressed frustration when plans for the ballot measure were withdrawn . Building on his 2007 bill to allow purchasing of " green " products , Kefalas also sponsored a measure to require Colorado governments to consider products ' expected life and cost of ownership in making purchasing decisions , which was signed into law .

Among Kefalas ' top priorities is restoring and expanding Colorado 's earned income tax credit , a move which met with resistance from legislative leaders in 2007 due to budget constraints . Kefalas introduced a bill in the 2008 session to restore Colorado 's EITC at ten percent of the federal credit , but the bill was defeated in a House committee .

= = = 2008 election = = =

Holding office in a closely contested district , Kefalas is expected to be targeted by Colorado Republicans during his 2008 re @-@ election bid , which he formally announced in January 2008 . Since taking office , Kefalas sought to maintain a dialogue with constituents by leading a series of monthly " community conversations " on topics ranging from health care to mobile home parks , and named sustainable economic development his top priority in office .

Former Rep. Bob McCluskey announced his intention to run against Kefalas in February 2008 , pitting the two against each other for the third time in as many election cycles and creating a

competitive race in what was seen as one of Colorado's "swing" districts .

During the campaign , Kefalas held a fundraising advantage over McCluskey , with \$ 60 @, @ 000 cash on hand ? three times as much as McCluskey ? in mid @-@ September . By late October , Kefalas had raised over \$ 100 @, @ 000 , about \$ 15 @, @ 000 short of McCluskey 's fundraising total ; which included \$ 65 @, @ 000 that McCluskey donated to his own campaign .

McCluskey targeted Kefalas with a direct mail advertisement blaming Kefalas and the Democratic state legislature for high gasoline prices , a tactic Kefalas dismissed as " negative campaigning . " Kefalas also condemned independent ads attacking McCluskey 's legislative record as having " crossed the line of civility . " The 527 group Accountability for Colorado also spent over \$ 50 @, @ 000 in support of Kefalas ' re @-@ election , including mailers attacking McCluskey 's legislative record ; Kefalas also expressed disapproval of these advertisements .

McCluskey 's bid to unseat Kefalas was endorsed by the Denver Post , while Kefalas was endorsed by the Windsor Beacon and the Fort Collins Coloradoan . Kefalas ultimately won a second term with about 59 percent of the popular vote , becoming the first Democrat to win re @-@ election in the east Fort Collins district since 1936 .

= = = 2009 legislative session = = =

For the 2009 legislative session , Kefalas was named to seats on the House Appropriations Committee , the House Finance Committee , and the House Health and Human Services Committee . Kefalas has named health care reform as his top priority and plans on introducing legislation to create a single @-@ payer universal health care system in Colorado during the 2009 session . The bill was introduced as a proposal to create a 23 @-@ member commission to make recommendations as to how to implement a single @-@ payer system , and was reported favorably out of a House committee . However , Kefalas was one vote short of the 33 necessary to pass the legislation out of the house , and in April , asked that the legislation be killed .

Kefalas also sponsored the Colorado Innovation Investment Tax Credit , legislation to create \$ 750 @, @ 000 in tax credits for angel investors in startup companies , to increase support for job training programs , and to create a Colorado Railroad Authority to begin planning for statewide passenger rail service .

Kefalas also sponsored legislation to create an Economic Opportunity / Poverty Reduction Task Force , which he chaired following the regular session . The committee 's objective is to develop plans to reduce Colorado 's poverty rate by half in ten years , examining a broad range of issues from economic development to education to transportation to tax policy , and it considered potential legislation on topics ranging from the earned income tax credit to rent control .

Following the legislation session , Kefalas was the only male legislator honored with the Colorado Lawmakers Award by the Denver Women ? s Commission and the Colorado Women ? s Chamber of Commerce .

= = = 2010 election = = =

In August 2009 , Kefalas announced his intention to seek a third term in the legislature in the November 2010 legislative elections . Kefalas was reelected with 57 % of the vote .

= = = 2012 election = = =

Representative Kefalas announced that he would seek election to the state senate seat vacated by Bob Bacon . Kefalas ' bid was endorsed by The Fort Collins Coloradoan and several former elected officials . In the 2012 General Election , Representative Kefalas faced Republican challenger Syndi Anderson for the open Senate seat . Kefalas was elected by a wide margin of 58 % to 36 % with the remainder of the vote going to third @-@ party candidates . Senator Kefalas now represents the people of State Senate District 14 .