

State of Colorado

**INDEPENDENT STATE ELECTED
OFFICIAL PAY REPORT**

Published
December 15, 2025



COLORADO
Independent State Elected
Official Pay Commission



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Honorable Senator James Coleman
President of the Senate, Colorado General Assembly
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Honorable Representative Julie McCluskie
Speaker of the House, Colorado General Assembly
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear President Coleman and Speaker McCluskie:

In creating the Independent State Elected Official Pay Commission (Commission), the General Assembly recognizes the need for a systematic and ongoing review of the compensation for state elected officials. Both the 1975 and 1979 State Official Compensation Commissions noted in their reports that the salaries of state elected officials have not kept up with state officials in similar states or with the cost of living and the cost of labor increases in Colorado. The 2025 Commission found that still to be the case for the General Assembly members and particularly for the state elected officers, who were found to be 13.71% to 35.32% below the median salaries of their counterparts in comparator states.

One of the goals expressed in the Commission's discussions was to set salaries at a level that will allow a broad range of Coloradans to pursue an elected office; there is a need to ensure that working people can hold these positions without undue economic hardship. The salary and per diem recommendations that the committee arrived at reflect that as a factor. However, the Commission recommendations also consider the current budgetary shortfall that the State of Colorado is experiencing.

The Commission would like to express gratitude to the State employees who provided valuable assistance with the research, communications, and preparation of this report. Natalie Castle and Alex Goddard provided helpful historical data. Annabel Asp, Doug Platt, and Meg Sutter for their hard work on behalf of the Commission. Finally, a special thanks to Barb Holmes for her incredible organizing skills and dedicated support of the Commission's work.

Please feel free to reach out to the Commission members or staff if there are questions or concerns about the information provided in the report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Skip Miller' and the second is 'Travis Tom'.

Skip Miller, Chair

Travis Tom, Vice Chair

Commission Members:

Jon Caldara
Terry Faber
Joshua Scharf
John Singletary
Brian Wong
PT Wood

cc: Governor's Office, Joint Budget Committee Members, Office of State Planning and Budget, Legislative Council Staff Director

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Requirements

As outlined in House Bill 24-1059, the newly formed Independent State Elected Official Pay Commission (Commission) is responsible for recommending annual salaries and allowances for each elected state official. Specifically, to provide salary recommendations for the following:

1. The amount of the annual base compensation for members of the General Assembly, pursuant to section 2-2-307 (1)(b),
2. The amount of additional compensation that members of the General Assembly are allowed for necessary attendance at meetings or functions or to legislative matters, pursuant to section 2-2-307 (3)(a),
3. The amount of the annual salaries for state officials allowed pursuant to section 24-9-101; and
4. The sum per day allowed as expenses to the president of the senate, speaker of the house of representatives, minority leader of the senate, or minority leader of the house of representatives while for any reason acting as governor pursuant to section 24-9-101 (1)(c).

In making the recommendations required by subsection (6)(a), the Commission shall consider:

- The amount of compensation paid in government service and in the private sector to persons with similar qualifications;
- The amount of compensation needed to attract and retain experienced and competent persons; and
- The ability of the State of Colorado to pay the recommended compensation.

Methodology and Standard Practices

The Commission, within the limited time and resources available, has given careful attention and consideration to the requirements of this report. The Commission engaged with a third party vendor, Mercer, to conduct an independent market analysis of the four (4) compensation matters set before the Commission.

Methodology

- The Commission selected 15 states that have key similarities to the State of Colorado, while providing a broad national view: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. Mercer collected public data from these peer states to compare against Colorado positions.
- Cost of labor adjustments were included in the market analysis to bring the salaries in alignment with Colorado. Four of the 15 states have cost of labor within the 5% margin of error and therefore have no cost of labor adjustment.
- Compensation data sources include:
 - The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) 2025 report on state legislatures' compensation practices, including salaries and travel reimbursement.
 - Current data directly from peer states for state official salaries.
- There are at least 10 data points used to benchmark each position.
- Due to the minimal qualifications for elected officials, it is difficult to correlate these positions to the private market, and therefore private market data was not included in this analysis, with the exception of the attorney general.

Standard Pay Practices

- Most organizations target median market pay levels at all levels within the organization.
- Pay levels within +/- 10% of the market median represent strong alignment to the targeted market.
- Pay levels between the 25th and 75th percentile of the target market are generally considered "competitive."

Cost of Labor Adjustments

The cost of labor is the competitive wage paid for a particular job in a geographic area. It is driven by the local supply and demand of labor.

- The cost of labor data was derived from Mercer's 2025 Compensation Planning Survey.
- Colorado aggregate statewide cost of labor is 4.2%.
- To provide the best comparison to peer states, the market data from each peer state has been normalized to Colorado's cost of labor.
- When a state's cost of labor is within 5% of Colorado's cost of labor (0.8% - 9.2%), no adjustment is needed. These differences are within a statistical margin of error.

State	Statewide Cost of Labor	Within Margin of Error	Cost of Labor Adjustment
Alaska	9.0%	Yes	n/a
Arkansas	-7.2%	No	12.28%
Delaware	2.70%	Yes	n/a
Florida	-4.4%	No	9.00%
Hawaii	11.6%	No	-6.63%
Indiana	-3.9%	No	8.43%
Iowa	-6.3%	No	11.21%
Minnesota	2.2%	Yes	n/a
Montana	-2.2%	No	6.54%
Missouri	-6.8%	No	11.80%
Nevada	2.7%	Yes	n/a
North Dakota	-7.2%	No	12.28%
South Carolina	-5.1%	No	9.80%
Tennessee	-5.9%	No	10.73%
Washington	10.70%	No	-5.87%
Colorado	4.2%	n/a	n/a

Recommendations

Elected Official	Current Colorado Rate	25th Percentile	Median	Current +/- Median	Recommendations	New +/- Median
General Assembly	\$47,561	\$36,212	\$50,802	6.38% below	\$50,802	=
Governor	\$134,632	\$149,230	\$169,119	20.39% below	\$149,230	11.8% below
Lt. Governor	\$102,027	\$106,086	\$118,232	13.71% below	\$106,086	10.3% below
Attorney General	\$117,677	\$149,817	\$174,027	32.38% below	\$170,000	14.8% below
Secretary of State	\$102,027	\$128,621	\$157,738	35.32% below	\$128,621	18.5% below
State Treasurer	\$102,027	\$130,385	\$153,946	33.73% below	\$130,385	15.3% below

- The Commission recommends adjusting the salary of the General Assembly members to \$50,802.
 - The Commission recommends adjusting the mileage reimbursement rate to match the Federal IRS rate.
 - The Commission recommends adjusting the per diem for off-session duties to a daily rate of \$193.
 - Furthermore, the Commission recommends adjusting the sum per day allowed as expenses to \$100 for the president of the senate, speaker of the house of representatives, minority leader of the senate, or minority leader of the house of representatives while for any reason acting as governor pursuant to section 24-9-101 (1)(c).
- The Commission recommends adjusting the governor's salary to \$149,230.
- The Commission recommends adjusting the lieutenant Governor's salary to \$106,086.
- The Commission recommends adjusting the attorney general's salary to \$170,000.
- The Commission recommends adjusting the secretary of state's salary to \$128,621.
- The Commission recommends adjusting the salary of the state treasurer to \$130,385.

Rationale for Recommendations

The Commission deemed the current salaries of the state elected officials to be inadequate considering the significance of the work performed. Additionally, the Commission considered a wage that would attract and retain experienced and competent persons.

- The recommendation to pay the General Assembly at the median rate was based on a strong salary match to the market with a minimal impact on the state budget.
 - The recommendation to set the mileage reimbursement rate to the Federal mileage reimbursement rate was based on the standard practice amongst the peer groups and to simplify the process.
 - The recommendation is to adjust the out-of-session per diem rate to \$193. The Commission found that the per diem rate had not changed since 1990. This sets the rate at 75% of its 2025 equivalent (based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator).
 - The recommendation is to adjust the sum per day from \$20 to \$100. The Commission found that the \$20 per diem goes back to, at least 1953. This adjustment sets the rate at 40% of its 2025 equivalent (based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator).
- The Commission recommends a salary equivalent to the 25th percentile of the peer groups for the elected officers (excluding the attorney general). The Commission did not recommend adjusting the current salary to the median rate, given the budgetary constraints the State of Colorado is experiencing. The 25th percentile is considered a competitive rate.
- The Commission relied on the median peer group rate along with the average compensation for a full-time attorney in the Denver area. The median rate for the peer group is \$174,027 and the average compensation for an experienced associate is \$170,000*. The recommendation is \$170,000 for the attorney general.

*based on Ziprecruiter and Glassdoor

Conclusion

The Commission acknowledges that the budget constraints that Colorado is currently under have impacted the compensation recommendations. Additionally, the Commission notes that these recommendations will be in place for the next four years and not just the current year.

The Commission found that the current compensation for state elected officials was not adequate based on criteria as stated in HB 24-1059. The stated criteria to be considered for compensation recommendation are as follows:

- The amount in compensation paid in government service and in the private sector to persons with similar qualifications.
- The amount of compensation needed to attract and retain experienced and competent persons.
- The ability for the State to pay the recommended compensation.

Four years from now, the next iteration of the Commission will be tasked with determining the recommendations for appropriate compensation levels for state elected officials. It is hoped that the State finds itself in a more favorable budgetary position than currently exists.