



## New to Colorado

Colorado's population reached nearly 5.8 million according to the 2020 census, a 14.8 percent increase from 2010. For those joining the influx of new people moving to the Centennial State, this *issue brief* outlines best practices for establishing residency, applying for state identification, registering a vehicle, registering to vote, and paying state income taxes. It also provides links to other Legislative Council Staff (LCS) resources that may be helpful in understanding Colorado's state budget and policy landscape.

### Establishing Colorado Residency

The state defines a resident as a person who has made a home in Colorado or whose intention is to be a Colorado resident. In determining someone's intention to be a resident, the Department of Revenue will consider, among other things, Colorado voter registration, Colorado vehicle registration, Colorado driver license, school registration, property ownership, and residence of spouse or children.

New residents can establish residency by:

- owning or operating a business in Colorado;
- maintaining gainful employment; and/or
- residing in Colorado for 90 consecutive days.

### Information for Drivers

**Out-of-state transfer.** New residents may transfer their valid, out-of-state driver license to Colorado, and must do so within 30 days of establishing residency. They must also register their vehicle within 90 days in the county where they reside.

New residents will not normally be required to take a written exam or skills test if their driver license is valid or expired less than one year, was

issued by another U.S. state or territory, and is in their possession. When visiting a driver license office, new residents should bring the following (view the DMV's application *checklist* for more information):

- a driver license that is valid or expired less than one year;
- required *identification and proof of address documents*;
- for those under the age of 18, an *Affidavit of Liability or Guardianship (DR 2460)* must be signed by a parent/legal guardian in front of a driver license employee or notary; and
- the *applicable fee*.

**Military exemption.** Active duty U.S. military personnel and their spouses are exempt from obtaining a Colorado driver license when they have a valid driver license issued by another state.

**Vehicle title.** Drivers should convert their out-of-state title to a Colorado title before they register their vehicle by filling out the *Verification of Vehicle Identification Number form*, completed by either:

- a Colorado law enforcement officer;
- a licensed Colorado motor vehicle dealer; or
- a licensed Colorado emissions testing station.

For more information on transferring a driver license or vehicle title, visit the *DMV's New to Colorado site*.

### Registering to Vote

Online voter registration is available with a valid social security number, Colorado driver license or identification card, and can be done by visiting

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the [Voter Registration](#) page on the Colorado Secretary of State website. Voters can also register at a Division of Motor Vehicle office when applying for a new driver license or updating driver license information.

Mail-in ballots are sent automatically to voters who have established a residence in Colorado. To check voter registration status, visit the [Find My Voter Registration](#) page on the Colorado Secretary of State website.

## Taxes

**Income Tax.** Every full-year and part-year resident, and every nonresident with Colorado income sources, must file a Colorado income tax return if they are required to file a federal income tax return or they incurred a Colorado income tax liability. Colorado has a flat income tax rate of 4.40 percent.

**How to file.** Taxpayers will need to complete their federal income tax return first, then will use the figures from their federal return on their Colorado tax return. Coloradans can use the Department of Revenue's online service to file electronically for free if they have obtained a Colorado driver license or ID card. Visit the Department of Revenue's website to find [income tax forms for individuals and families](#). The department also has a [New Resident Guide](#) with additional information on paying taxes in Colorado, including retiree benefits and tax credits.

## Other Resources

The following LCS publications may be helpful to new residents and are provided in alphabetical order by category. Additional resources from LCS are available at our [Publications](#) page.

**Budget.** This [memorandum](#) provides a big picture overview of Colorado's state budget. Each quarter, LCS prepares a [forecast](#) of the Colorado and U.S. economies and state revenue.

Additionally, the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights in the state constitution limits the amount of revenue, from most sources, that the state government and local governments are permitted to retain and spend or save. This [memorandum](#) on the state's revenue limit outlines these provisions.

**Child care.** This [issue brief](#) covers information about child care assistance, licensing, and ratings.

**Initiative process.** Colorado allows any person to initiate a statewide ballot measure. That process is outlined on the [LCS website](#).

**Legislative process.** This [infographic](#) displays how a bill becomes a law in Colorado.

**Local government.** This [handbook](#) outlines the role and responsibilities of local governments.

**Marijuana.** This [handbook](#) provides an overview of marijuana's regulation in Colorado.

**Motor vehicle law.** Additional information about Colorado motor vehicle law is available in this [resource book](#).

**Professional licensing.** This [publication](#) highlights the professions and occupations that are regulated in Colorado, and by which agency.

**Public benefits and services.** This [publication](#) provides a guide to Colorado's public benefit programs and related services.

**Public school funding.** This [resource book](#) summarizes how public schools are funded in Colorado.

**Taxes.** In addition to income taxes, LCS' [Colorado Online Tax Handbook](#) provides information about each tax assessed by the state.

**Transportation.** This [resource book](#) explains Colorado's transportation system.

**Vaccinations.** This [issue brief](#) outlines Colorado's vaccination requirements and exemptions for school-aged children.