



Dear Joel,

These are not easy times for any of us, and I know what it's like for families across Colorado who are struggling to make ends meet.

I grew up in a big family of modest means. There were periods when my father couldn't find work. At times the only way my mother could put dinner on the table was with food stamps.

So when the recession forced our state government to close a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall earlier this year, I approached the difficult task of cutting costs **thoughtfully, surgically, and with deep compassion** for the families hit hardest by the downturn. I am taking the same approach now in order to close an additional (but lower than expected) \$318 million gap.

Making cuts is never easy, but together we have struck a fiscally responsible balance that minimizes pain, protects essential safety-net services, and maintains investments in our children and our future so that we can recover stronger, healthier, and quicker.

Our balancing plan reflects the same smart investment strategy, the same ethic of efficiency, and the same culture of cost-cutting I've instilled in state government since taking office in 2007. It includes over 100 separate line-item cuts, reducing state spending by 9% compared with last year's budget.

This plan will ask many Coloradans to share the burden. It reduces state funding for certain health and human services where community organizations are in a position to perform similar functions. It also cuts 267 state positions, maintains four unpaid furlough days for state employees and freezes salaries.

As part of this balancing plan, we will save \$20 million through an innovative pilot program that accelerates the transition from parole to community for certain non-violent parolees who are already nearing their release. A majority of other states are also adjusting their corrections and sentencing procedures to address declining revenues, and as a former criminal prosecutor I have made sure cost-cutting measures will keep Coloradans safe.

In spite of the downturn, we have avoided cuts to K-12 education. Support for higher education and services for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled remain higher now than when I took office in 2007. And we have protected tuition assistance for the National Guard, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and services for seniors like Meals on Wheels.

In the weeks and months ahead, I will be working closely with the legislature and my department heads to implement this entire balancing plan and to prepare next year's budget. I will once again put all balancing options back on the table if revenues continue to decline.

While the economy has slowed us down, it hasn't stopped us. Colorado remains in better shape than most other states thanks to the wise investments we've made over the past few years.

My vision remains strong: to create jobs of the future, to build a New Energy Economy, and to make Colorado a national leader in education and health care reform.

Even in these tough times, the strategy is working. Together, we'll come out of this downturn more determined than ever.

As always I welcome your [feedback](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Ritter, Jr." in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor