

## Rocky Mountain News

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### 'Offshoring' foes eye ballot

State couldn't send jobs overseas if measure were OK'd

**By Roger Fillion, Rocky Mountain News**  
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Coloradans may get a chance to vote this fall on whether to curb the practice of sending work overseas.

Outsourcing opponents are preparing to put a measure on the November ballot to prohibit state work from being shipped offshore. Only workers in this country would be permitted to work on state contracts.

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If organizers get the measure on the ballot, Colorado apparently would be the first state in the nation to put the hot-button issue up for a popular vote.

"This is the first I've ever heard of it," said Justin Marks, policy analyst with the Denver-based National Conference of State Legislatures.

The effort comes after Republicans killed two anti-outsourcing bills in the Colorado legislature. The business community helped quash the measures, which would have applied to state work. The issue of sending white-collar work to low-wage nations such as India and China has unleashed populist outrage.

**"If we don't get cooperation from our elected officials, then we have to use the next step - which is the ballot initiative," said Richard Armstrong, president of the National Hire American Citizens Society, an anti-outsourcing group in Parker that claims 6,500 members nationwide.**

Armstrong - a software engineer who said he has "lost three jobs to foreign labor" - is confident voters would approve the measure.

He said supporters of the proposed ballot measure are ready to begin gathering signatures once state officials approve the wording of their petition.

Organizers have lined up 100 people to gather the needed 67,829 signatures from registered voters. As many as 300 are expected to get aboard, Armstrong said.

So far, business groups have prevented anti-outsourcing bills from becoming law in state capitols. The National Hire American Citizens Society said anti-outsourcing bills have been offered in "at least" 35 states.

In Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota and Missouri, governors reportedly have taken on outsourcing

administratively.

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, has been the most aggressive, ordering that state work be done in the United States. Other governors have penned orders to discourage use of offshore labor for state work.

**A top business advocate conceded it might be tougher to stop a ballot issue than to stop legislation.**

"Outsourcing is harder to fight in a sound bite because it's so driven on emotion," said Heidi Heltzel, director of government affairs for the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry. "That's very difficult to fight at the ballot box."

CACI warns that anti-outsourcing measures could hamstring businesses and force up the cost of state contracts. "People need to recognize it's a global economy," Heltzel said.

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