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A Colorado Test - May 2008

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Colorado is a growing and constantly changing state. A goal of the Center for Colorado's Economic Future is to keep track of the changing condition of the state's economy, infrastructure, governmental structure and system of public finances. In the course of our work, some interesting facts have emerged.

Test your knowledge of Colorado with these questions:

A) Colorado has been described as having a fiscally decentralized structure – state government taxes are low and local government taxes are high. In 2005, Colorado ranked 47th in per capita state government taxes and 48th per \$1,000 of personal income. On the other hand, Colorado ranked 10th in per capita local taxes and 13th in local taxes per \$1,000 of income. Where did Colorado place in *combined* state and local government taxes per capita and per \$1,000 of income?

- ① 13th and 19th
- ② 21st and 34th
- ③ 28th and 47th
- ④ 43rd and 27th

B) Colorado was the third fastest-growing state during the 1990s. From 2000 to 2007, Colorado's population jumped by 13 percent, placing the state eighth in population growth. Douglas County retained its place as a fast-growing county, with its population increasing by 55 percent. Each of the eight counties on Colorado's western border recorded population gains and collectively they reported an increase of about 17 percent for the period. How many of the eight counties on Colorado's eastern border reported population increases?

- ① One
- ② Five
- ③ Six
- ④ Eight

C) Per capita income is one of the major measurements of wealth. It also is often used by the federal government in formulas for distributing federal funds. Colorado fell from 13th in 1980 to 18th in 1990 in per capita personal income. By 2000, however, Colorado climbed back to seventh place and reached sixth place in 2001. Even with the downturn in 2001 and 2002, Colorado

remained in the top 10 throughout the first seven years of this decade. Where did Colorado rank in per capita income percentage change from 2000 to 2007?

- ① First
- ② Eighth
- ③ 37th
- ④ 48th

D) Historically, Colorado has had one of the most highly educated adult populations in the nation. The state usually ranks second, behind Massachusetts, in annual surveys by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2006, the census bureau released data for the 25 largest states on educational attainment by age groups. Where did Colorado rank in its percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or better for the 18-24 age group?

- ① First
- ② Second
- ③ Fourth
- ④ Tied for 12th
- ⑤ 15th

E) Colorado has developed an extensive system of local government. There are counties, municipalities, school districts and special districts. Special districts provide services such as sanitation, water conservation, fire protection, cemeteries, irrigation and even a football stadium. How many units of government were there in Colorado at the end of April 2008?

- ① 178
- ② 268
- ③ 2,541
- ④ 3,052
- ⑤ Too many

F) Two age groups receive the bulk of state and local government services. Education spending impacts those younger than age 18. Health care costs are significant for those 65 and older. Nationally, the number of people 18 and younger is expected to increase by 15 percent from 2010 to 2030. A 23 percent increase for this age group is projected for Colorado during this period, the 12th largest among the states. As a share of the total population, however, Colorado will be only one of 10 states to show a percentage increase for those 18 and younger. Colorado's 65 and older age group is projected to grow faster than the national average. Where does Colorado rank in the percentage increase projected for the over-65 age group?

- ① Fifth
- ② 13th
- ③ 20th
- ④ 32nd

G) The U.S. Census Bureau's ongoing American Community Survey looks at a variety of socio-economic indicators and data to give a snapshot of where states are in relation to one another. Examples for 2006 include: the percent of households with one or more people age 65 and older

(Colorado ranked 50th among the 50 states and District of Columbia); percent of the civilian employed population 16 and older in management, business and financial occupations (Colorado ranked fourth); percent of population born in the state of residence (Colorado ranked 44th); and percent of occupied housing units with gas as principal heating fuel (Colorado ranked fourth). Where did Colorado rank in terms of the civilian employed population 16 years and older in the information industry?

- ① Second
- ② Seventh
- ③ 27th
- ④ 46th

Answer Code (correct answer circled):

- A: ③ Colorado’s high local government taxes were responsible for its middle ranking, 28th nationwide in combined state and local taxes. However, Colorado’s relative wealth lowered the ranking to 47th in the nation when combined taxes were related to income.
- B: ① Only Phillips County, in the northeastern corner, showed a population increase from 2000 to 2007. It grew by 19 people, or 0.4 percent. Altogether, the eight eastern border counties reported a collective decline of 7 percent for the period. The continued contraction of population raises important questions as to future economic opportunity in that part of the state. There is a dramatic difference among Colorado counties in terms of growth, with many mountain, resort and Western Slope counties recording rapid population increases, and most Eastern Plains counties experiencing decreases.
- C: ④ Colorado was third from the bottom, ranking 48th over the period. Per capita income increased by 23 percent from 2000 to 2007. While Colorado has remained in the top 10 states in per capita income during this decade, its very low growth rate may indicate underlying economic problems. Wyoming ranked first in percentage growth in per capita income from 2000 to 2007, up 52 percent. Mississippi placed eighth, rising by 37 percent. Kentucky placed 37th with an increase of 27 percent.
- D: ④ Colorado was tied for 12th in four-year college degrees for young adults among the 25 largest states. It ranked second for all age groups over 18. It ranked fourth for both the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups and first for those 65 and older. Colorado placed 15th among 21 states in its percentage of adult Hispanics with at least a bachelor’s degree. In the 21st century’s knowledge-based economy, a highly-educated workforce is an essential competitive ingredient. If Colorado fails to either educate its own or attract educated workers, its future economic prospects will be jeopardized.
- E: ④ By the end of April 2008, there were 3,052 governmental units in Colorado, including the state government itself. There were 178 K-12 public school districts, 268 municipalities (excluding the two combined city/county governments in Denver and Broomfield), 64 counties and 2,541 special and other districts. Trying to understand the dynamics of 3,000 governments may prompt some to say “too many.”

- F: ③ Colorado's 85 percent projected increase from 2010 to 2030 will place it 20th among the states in percentage growth in the over-65 age group. Even if the projections are off, programs for seniors will grow in the next 25 years with the aging of baby boomers. Health care and state Medicaid costs will surge with this demographic shift.
- G): ① Colorado ranked second after the District of Columbia in its percentage of employees in the information industry. The state of Washington was fifth, North Carolina 27th and Wyoming 46th. While the information industry suffered a bubble burst in the late 1990s, it remains an important component in the knowledge-based economy of the future.