

Executive summary

Sen. John Hickenlooper is out of touch with voters in Colorado, on policy, and on instinct. At a time when Democratic voters have never been more clear about their desire to see elected officials put up a meaningful fight against Donald Trump and the Republican agenda, Hickenlooper has repeatedly chosen “deal maintenance” and “process” over standing for progressive policies that support working people. In Trump’s second term, that has meant **helping advance Trump-aligned agendas** on immigration enforcement and deregulation, while defending those choices as pragmatic inside-Washington bargaining. Fundamentally, Hickenlooper has proven more willing to capitulate to Donald Trump than to lead an effective resistance against the Trump administration.

A Colorado Newsline analysis of Senate voting patterns found Colorado’s Democratic senators produced [the nation’s biggest “pro-Trump skew”](#) when compared against 2024 presidential results. In fact, Hickenlooper voted more frequently with Donald Trump than Independent Sen. Angus King, whose home state of Maine saw a much narrower 2024 Democratic margin than Colorado, and whose other Senator is a Republican. Time and again, Hickenlooper has proven that he is not interested in putting up an effective fight against Donald Trump and the Republicans.

Hickenlooper’s campaign is fueled by a traditional, high-dollar corporate ecosystem (including substantial “other committee” money/PAC checks). He has been penalized for accepting prohibited gifts, including traveling aboard a private jet owned by Elon Musk’s brother, Kimbal Musk, and a limousine ride. Hickenlooper has faced conflicts-of-interest concerns tied to holding up to \$5 million each in Apple and Microsoft stock while chairing a Senate panel overseeing consumer protection, technology, and data privacy. While Colorado wants a watch dog, they instead got an ally of Big Tech and corporate interested. FEC data show his principal committee raised **\$4.3M** from Jan. 1–Sept. 30, 2025, including **\$577,917.77** in “other committee contributions.”

Bottom line: In Donald Trump’s second term, Colorado needs a senator who will fight the powerful and support workers, not someone whose instinct is to capitulate to the Republicans and support policies that hurt working families, reduce access to health care, and increase costs on consumers. Colorado needs Julie Gonzales.

Key takeaways:

1. Lack of stamina: Hickenlooper is unable to be the fighter Colorado needs.
2. Bought-out Incrementalism: With a personal, [insider-traded fortune](#) estimated at around \$30 million and tech holdings in Apple and Microsoft worth up to [\\$5 million each](#), Hickenlooper represents an old-guard wing of the political establishment that has sold out to corporations. Hickenlooper serves as the leading Democrat on a committee dedicated to crafting tech and privacy policy, but [benefits directly from the companies that are most often affected](#). Instead of taking on Big Tech’s monopoly power, he’s avoided signing onto major antitrust bills targeting Apple and Microsoft while counting their employees among his top donor bases: proof that his “pragmatism” too often leads to the protection of powerful interests.
3. Untrustworthy advocate: When promising Coloradans that he would stand up to the Trump administration, Hickenlooper gave away the [nation’s largest pro-Trump skew](#) in Senate votes, a complete [betrayal to the voters who got him the seat](#). Senate Democrats promised to stand up to Donald Trump, but voters in Colorado are constantly being let down by their junior senator.

II. Incumbent profile & vulnerabilities (Hickenlooper)

Vulnerability lanes:

- **Compromise vs. firm stance:** Hickenlooper's [moderate, inconsistent approach](#) and willingness to appease MAGA leadership hid an avoidance of strong positions for Coloradans. He has [supported Trump's agenda](#) more than any other Democratic senator in Washington as measured against home-state presidential vote share.
- **Apathetic:** Hickenlooper [repeatedly bashes being a US Senator](#), saying he does not believe he's "cut out" to be a senator, that he would "hate it," and "it wouldn't bring (him) any satisfaction," and that it would be "hard to imagine (he) would be successful as a senator" before announcing his bid for the seat in 2020. His statements reflect his self-interest, not putting Coloradans first in his decision-making.

Lane A: Immigration "messaging bills" and detention-first posture

- Hickenlooper has repeatedly chosen to advance immigration measures that expand enforcement and detention — without including a pathway to citizenship or comprehensive immigration reform.
 - Examples include his 2024 vote for S. 4361, which codified Trump-era deterrence policies, including "**expansive immigration detention**," removing due process **protections for access to counsel** and reducing court review, as well as his 2025 vote to proceed on S. 5 (Lake Riley Act), which includes a mandatory detention expansion, but does not establish access to basic due process protections.

Lane B: Consumer risk + deregulation—crypto as a case study

- Hickenlooper voted to overturn SEC guidance meant to address how crypto firms account for customer assets—part of a broader pattern where he sides with deregulation even when it increases consumer exposure to fraud and instability.
- While Hickenlooper claims to support banning stock trading for members of Congress and their spouses, he has profited enormously during his time as a Senator. As a multimillionaire, Hickenlooper is out of touch with the working people he claims to represent.

Lane C: Health care access—marketplace protections treated as political games

- Hickenlooper voted to advance a resolution to disapprove ACA marketplace rules—an approach that risks destabilizing access and affordability for people buying coverage on their own.
- Year after year, Hickenlooper has [sided with the health insurance lobby](#) to demand increased federal funding for for-profit "Medicare Advantage" plans, which have been found to [provide substandard care](#) while also [defrauding the federal government](#) by tens of billions of dollars annually.

Lane D: Foreign policy—blank-check instincts

- Hickenlooper voted against motions to discharge resolutions seeking to block arms sales/exports to Israel, aligning with the status quo rather than heightened scrutiny and human-rights conditions.

III. Bad votes

Vote / Action	Impact	PAC Connections	Julie Gonzales contrast
Endorsed the NAFTA free-trade agreement	From job losses and outsourcing to wage suppression, the NAFTA trade agreement Hickenlooper rubber-stamped has led to worker exploitation , environmental degradation , and deficit growth .	With corporate interest controlling the market, we look to Big Tech as one group who have lots to gain from this trade agreement. For example, Google is one of Hickenlooper's largest corporate PAC donors, giving over \$242,000+ since 2019 .	Julie runs a worker-first economic frame: trade policy must include enforceable labor, climate standards, anti-offshoring rules, and real penalties for union-busting/abuse, not corporate-written deals.
Voted to appoint ten of Donald Trump's appointees	Hickenlooper said, "My hope and my gut is that we will definitely get benefits from it." Meanwhile, the appointees he voted for have real downstream consequences: agency leadership sets enforcement priorities on labor standards, consumer protection, climate, immigration, and corporate accountability. For example, they slashed SNAP , USDA , and fired thousands of health officials , who continue to directly harm farmers and families in Colorado.	Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's deregulation agenda is opening the floodgates to corporate profiteering at the expense of consumers. Shareholders such as John Hickenlooper stand to profit enormously while working people foot the bill through increased costs.	Julie's contrast is movement accountability over "go-along" Senate culture. She will treat confirmations as values votes (workers, immigrants, consumers, climate), not inside-baseball "deal maintenance."
Opposed ColoradoCare , a ballot measure that would have created a single-payer health care system.	Opposing ColoradoCare aligns with keeping a profit-driven insurance system where people face premiums, deductibles, narrow networks, medical debt, and employers have leverage through health care.	To satisfy his Big Pharma donors and lobbyists, Hickenlooper will continue to suppress access to health care to benefit insurance agencies with stakes in his platform.	Julie would argue that health care is a human right, protect/expand coverage, take on price-gouging, and pursue public options / Medicare-for-All style pathways instead of protecting insurer margins.
Voted to advance S.4361 , a messaging bill that would take away critical protections for asylees and failed to include a pathway to citizenship for	Advancing "border-first" bills without citizenship can **normalize enforcement-only policing and deportation systems, and leave DREAMers/families in limbo.	Non-applicable	Julie has been a consistent fighter for the immigrant community. She believes that citizenship + due process + humane asylum, and not "messaging bills" that trade away protections

DREAMers; an attempt to push forward an attempted bipartisan measure that was no longer bipartisan .			or use immigrant communities as bargaining chips.
Turned his back on the immigrant community and voted to block stimulus payments to immigrants during the pandemic, siding with the Republican Party.	Cutting immigrant families out of relief deepened hardship , hurt kids in mixed-status households, and weakened local economies.	Non-applicable	Julie would explicitly defend inclusive relief: if you work here, pay taxes here, and have a family to support here, you shouldn't be excluded from help in an international crisis.
Hickenlooper voted to proceed on the Laken Riley Act consideration to expand detention center crackdowns; candidates like Bernie and Warren voted no .	Expanding mandatory detention/dragnet enforcement drives more detention, more family separation harms, and more pressure on local systems, while failing to fix immigration at the root (courts, legal pathways, labor protections, citizenship pathways).	Might not be a connection, just a more conservative vote.	Julie will focus on violent actors, protect due process, end private detention profiteering, and pair border management with citizenship and worker protections.
Hickenlooper voted with Republicans to roll back SEC guardrails around crypto	Weakening SEC guardrails in crypto increases risk of fraud, collapse, and consumer losses, and can accelerate "shadow banking" instability.	Most of Hickenlooper's money comes from individuals where he receives significant crypto industry executive money, suggesting he is positioned as a key ally . Executives are from Uniswap, Coinbase, Ripple, Solana Labs, Paradigm, and OpenAI, contributing ~\$52,000 .	Julie's line: protect consumers, enforce rules, build guardrails for crypto billionaires, and stop letting speculation write policy.
Hickenlooper voted Nay on Sanders-led efforts to force action on disapproving arms sales/exports to Israel .	Hickenlooper is reinforcing a blank-check posture that can enable civilian harm and erode U.S. credibility on human rights. As of early January 2026, the total reported Palestinian death toll in Gaza since	While 80% of democrats want to see an arms embargo on Israel, Hickenlooper remains complacent, taking corporate PAC money from groups like AIPAC to go against the will of the people.	Julie has refused to take a dime of money from AIPAC and aligned, dark money organizations. She is fundamentally opposed to writing blank checks as part of her foreign policy, and she will support conditioning/halting

	October 2023 has exceeded 71,600, with over 171,400 injured , according to reports from the Gaza Health Ministry and confirmed by Israel.		weapons transfers when they enable atrocities, and continue to prioritize diplomacy and the global right to self-determination for all people.
Hickenlooper voted to advance a resolution that would roll back ACA marketplace protections—and even targets DACA recipients’ access to coverage.	Marketplace “integrity” rollbacks and eligibility fights mean coverage losses, more uninsured Coloradans, higher uncompensated care, and more families delaying treatment.	Hickenlooper’s campaign has received extensive support from Big Pharma , totaling over \$318,000 during his tenure as a Senate candidate.	Julie will protect and expand ACA access and explicitly fight for DACA recipients’ right to affordable coverage. She will not treat immigrant families as collateral in procedural games.

IV. Community apathy & permission structure

- Insensitive: Hickenlooper recently [described Black ministers as “articulate.”](#) and does not understand the electorate at large, especially from the position of being [600 times more wealthy than the average Coloradan.](#)
- **Out of Touch:** While the majority (75%) of all [voters in Colorado believe the US is in crisis mode](#), Hickenlooper’s [messaging does not meet the moment](#), and [voters have been noticing](#) his inability to connect for years.
- Corruption: The most significant corporate donations Hickenlooper receives are from the oil and gas industry, where Anadarko Petroleum and Noble Energy gave at least [\\$325,000 to Hickenlooper’s office](#) in his second term alone, according to a months-long analysis of state records conducted by The Colorado Sun and [CBS4 Denver](#). At least one donation from Anadarko came in May 2017, weeks after [the deadly Firestone explosion](#) that investigators traced back to a well owned by the company.

V. Colorado/Denver polling & local sentiment

- **Dangerous complacency:** Eileen McCarron, who leads the gun-control advocacy group Ceasefire Colorado, remembers meeting with Hickenlooper in the months after the July 2012 Aurora theater shooting to talk about a push for more stringent firearm laws. [“He was very noncommittal.”](#) she said. “I remember someone I was with at that meeting said, ‘Well, that was a waste of time.’”
- **Unrelatable:** With the median age of Colorado residents being [39](#), and with an increase of diverse Coloradan citizens since 2012, Hickenlooper refuses [to connect or speak with the electorate.](#)
- **Nicknames:** Voters are frustrated by Hickenlooper’s approach to the regulation of industries, such as the oil and gas industry. His critics dubbed him “Frackenlooper,” an homage to his support of [hydraulic fracturing](#), made famous by his admission that he once [drank fracking fluid](#). He has also been nicknamed “Chickenlooper” for not standing up for Coloradan interests, reflected in his [favorability consistently dropping.](#)

VI. Other vulnerabilities

- Unethical: [The Independent Ethics Commission fined Hickenlooper](#) \$2,200 for a flight to Connecticut on a private jet and \$550 for accepting a ride in a limousine in Italy. These “gifts” were given by Larry Mizel, who is connected to Jeffrey Epstein and is a [top donor to the Trump administration](#), surrounded by scandal.
- **Deep Conservative Ties:** Robin Hickenlooper, John’s wife who is the Head of Business Development at Liberty Media, works for one of the largest media firms on the planet. Her boss for 20 years was [John C. Malone, the CEO](#), who is on the board of directors at the Cato institute and has [given at least 250k to Trump over the years.](#)

- Anti-environmentalist: Hickenlooper [outwardly opposes the Green New Deal](#) saying, “We should not try to tackle climate change by guaranteeing every American a government job,” which was said at a Democratic convention that led to a cacophony of booing. Hickenlooper also does not support a ban on fracking, boldly stating, “it would make no difference to the climate.”
- Trail of Failures: After promising to end Denver’s homelessness crisis in 10 years with Hickenlooper’s Denver’s Road Home 2005 initiative, homelessness had significantly increased by 2020. Hickenlooper wasted 16 years of opportunity to solve big, comprehensive problems that [burden the whole state](#).