



LWV's Response to Election Bills: Empower Voters. Defend Democracy

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The "Stop the Steal" movement and accusations against Dominion Voting Systems (headquartered in Colorado) have served to increase the level of distrust in our elections. Legislatures across the US have tried to capitalize on this mood, and Colorado is not immune. Colorado is somewhat unique, however, because we have all-mail voting and are admired and respected for our post-election audits.

In this environment and with both Colorado chambers controlled by a Democratic majority, the Republican-sponsored election bills in this paragraph have already met a quick end. Using our own descriptive titles, the bills would have:

Made voting more difficult (LWVCO strongly opposed)

- SB 007: Default to in-person voting
- HB 1086: Proof of citizenship to vote

Questioned Colorado's election results and audits (Secretary of State argued that these were unnecessary)

- HB 1053: Allow any voter to request a recount
- HB 1088: Annual audit of voter registration system
- HB 1176: Create a commission on auditing election processes

Fixed a loophole or worked to improve processes

- SB 010: Requirements for a Witness of an Elector's Ballot
- HB 1170: Committee on Elections and Information Technology

In addition, our Legislative Action Committee (LAC) Elections Team felt that SB 010 and HB 1170 had merit, but were, respectively, too extreme and too political. We would welcome similar, but improved, bills in a future session.

The League supports HB 1011: Hotline for Ballot Language Translations which could increase voter education and participation. HB 1011 and the remaining following bills are all moving through the legislative process.

We have been working with the stakeholders of SB 188: Electronic Ballot Return for Voters with Disabilities. Currently, such voters can receive and mark a ballot electronically, but must print and submit a paper ballot. Because internet voting is not secure, LWVUS encourages submission of a paper ballot whenever possible. We are hoping that the bill sponsor will limit electronic ballot return to voters with a print disability, rather than allow more widespread internet voting.

We have also actively contributed to and strongly support HB 1071: Facilitating Instant-Runoff (Ranked) Voting for Municipal Elections. The city of Boulder is due to hold an instant-runoff voting (IRV)

election for mayor in 2023, but the county clerk needs the authorization and infrastructure provided by this bill to conduct such an election. Boulder would be the biggest Colorado city by far to hold an IRV election.

Two campaign finance bills have been introduced, including SB 177: Restrict Foreign-Influenced Money in Politics which the Sec of State strongly supports. We are still studying the other bill, HB 1240: Remove Requirement that Natural Person be Named in Campaign Independent Expenditures over \$1000, but it appears to reduce transparency of money in politics and faces a similar challenge as the Republican-sponsored bills named above.

Two bills affect candidate eligibility. One bill affects lieutenant governor candidates. With very limited exceptions, e.g., special district boards, “No person is eligible to be a candidate for more than one office at one time” CRS, 1-4-501(2), but HB 1092: Allow Lt Gov Candidate to be a Candidate for Another Office would make an exception for a lieutenant governor candidate. The bill was amended in committee to prohibit a lieutenant governor candidate from running for US Senate or US House and to require a candidate, who is elected to both of the seats they sought, to accept only the lieutenant governor position. The LAC believes that HB 1092 can lead to voter confusion. Another concern is creating a vacancy that is not filled by the electorate. Depending on statute, either a political party’s vacancy committee or one or more elected officials fill the vacancy.

The other bill tangentially affects county commissioner candidates and only applies to Arapahoe, El Paso, and Weld Counties which do not elect all of their county commissioners at large, but by district voters. The bill, HB 1047: Drawing County Commissioner Districts, would set up a process for the redistricting commission to get public input and to meet certain criteria for their maps.

Above we’ve mentioned most of this session’s election bills. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the LAC Voting and Elections Team. You can reach us via lobbyist@lwvcolorado.org.