

LWV of Boulder County Statement

Re: Ordinance 8143 – to place Direct Elect Mayor Using Instant-Runoff Voting proposal on Nov ballot August 12, 2020 Boulder City Council Meeting

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization striving to make democracy work for all. In our ongoing effort to empower voters and defend democracy, we are very heartened by the community's interest in improving our electoral systems, most recently in the discussion of how Boulder chooses its mayor. With that in mind, the League was happy to sponsor the recent forum: *Improving Boulder City Governance through Better Electoral Systems*.

The Our Mayor proponents, working with the City Attorney's Office, recently modified their ballot proposal, resulting in significantly improved language. Our Voting Methods Team requests one more modification. Please change the ballot language to replace every instance of "ranked choice voting" with "instant-runoff voting" or "instant-runoff (ranked) voting." Ranked Choice Voting or RCV is actually an umbrella term referring to a variety of ranking methods that transfer votes. Neither the Colorado Secretary of State nor Colorado statute (*HB08-1378*) uses the confusing RCV term.

Additionally, we urge all those involved in campaigning for this measure to accurately describe the instant-runoff process. The proponents' campaign material, for instance, claims, "RCV ensures that the mayor is elected by a majority of voters." This is false. For instance, in 2018 in San Francisco and Maine's instant-runoff elections, the majority of voters did NOT vote for the eventual winner. Instant-runoff voting offers more voter expression, but, still, guaranteeing a majority of all of the voters is an impossible criterion to meet when there are 3 or more candidates.

Going forward, the Boulder County League's Voting Methods Team hopes to serve as a resource in the crafting of any future electoral-system initiatives and in educating the electorate on such ballot issues. If Boulder convenes another study group on elections, as recommended by a subset of the Campaign Finance Working Group, please include a member of our Voting Methods Team.

Our Team would also like to present on the topic of proportional voting methods at a future city council study session. In other cities which use the same at-large multi-winner council elections that Boulder uses, courts have ordered a different election structure in order to be more inclusive of underrepresented populations and perspectives.

In conclusion, if the city of Boulder decides to have its mayor chosen by the electorate, then instant-runoff voting is an improvement. The League of Women Voters supports voting methods that are better than the standard vote-for-one method. Much more information on ways to improve our city's elections, including a link to our recent online forum, can be found on our webpage, lwvbc.org > [Teams at Work > Voting Methods](#).

Thank you for engaging with the community as we strive to make democracy work for all.