

SB21-010 Colorado Ballot Signature Verification Act

Good afternoon Chairman and Committee members. My name is Jean Nofles, volunteer state president for AARP of Colorado and its 660,000 plus members.

AARP strongly opposes SB21-010, the Colorado Ballot Signature Verification Act.

SB21-010 is an obstacle for an eligible elector who is unable to sign, with or without assistance, a mail in ballot. The bill requires a registered voter who lives in the same county as the eligible elector, to witness the elector's ballot and disclose his/her own voter identification number on the envelope of the elector's ballot. This bill also threatens to treat the eligible elector's ballot as a provisional ballot if the obstacles of this bill are not adhered to.

Colorado code (1-1-103) annotated instructions clearly state that the code "...shall be liberally construed so that all eligible electors may be permitted to vote and those who are not eligible electors may be kept from voting in order to prevent fraud and corruption in elections".

Current Colorado election law requires a witness only when the eligible elector signs/affirms the ballot with a mark rather than a signature. The witness needs neither to be a registered voter nor live in the same county as the eligible elector. There is no requirement to write the identification number of the witness on the elector's ballot envelope. There is no threat of treating a ballot signed with a mark and witnessed, as a provisional ballot.

Neither of the proposed requirements of SB21-010 increases the integrity of the ballot or the election system. Nor do these proposed requirements increase confidence in the election system. In fact, this bill, with its threat of provisional balloting (with a higher potential of rejection), erodes confidence in the election system.

Colorado election law does not require a witness to disclose her/his voter identification number. And, indeed, there is no reason for a witness to disclose her/his voter identification number on the envelope of another elector's ballot.

SB21-010 is contrary to the Help America Vote Act, 2002. It does not follow the Colorado Election Code guidance and is an unnecessary barrier to voting.

It impedes the voting abilities of older people, those living in long term care facilities, the blind, disabled¹, those in need of assistance, those routinely relying on families and friends for help; family and friends who do not always live in the same county as the elector. Neighbors and helpers are not necessarily registered voters.

The point is that Colorado's election system is designed to be expansive, inclusive, secure, accurate and convenient so that all eligible voters can participate in the democratic process. SB21-010 erects obstacles, restricts voting ability, discourages certain categories of voters and threatens the counting of their ballots.

SB21-010 deliberately inhibits the voting process.

SB21-010 has the potential to reject the ballots of eligible electors.

AARP strongly opposes any attempts to restrict voting access or curtail the rights of eligible citizens to vote for the people and laws that will govern them.

I ask for a resounding "NO" on this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

¹ Cognitive impairment ranges from mild to dementia; Mayo Clinic Overview of MCI