



October, 23, 2024

### **Vote Yes on Prop 131 (Final-4 Voting): A Rebuttal to Senator Bennet**

US Senator Michael Bennet has widely disseminated a letter opposing Proposition 131, arguing that he doesn't see "*any persuasive reason to believe the new [system] will actually be better.*" On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWVCO), we're happy to present some of the reasons we support Prop 131.

LWVCO agrees with Senator Bennet that Colorado has a "*best-in-the-nation system of elections*" when it comes to election integrity and high voter turnout in the even-year November elections. But our low-turnout partisan primaries exclude voters, despite primaries being the decisive election for many seats, particularly so-called "safe" seats. Prop 131 makes the higher-turnout general election the decisive election.

LWVCO agrees with Senator Bennet that money in politics is a problem, but we don't see the "*real risk that dark money will play an even more destructive role in our democracy*" if Proposition 131 passes. How does increasing competitiveness in the general election and giving voters more voice increase the risk of dark money? We would like concrete examples, not scare tactics.

We love our Colorado county clerks and their hardworking, dedicated staff! We are sad to see them bearing "*the brunt of election turmoil and security threats in recent years.*" Meanwhile, Prop 131 is good for democracy because more voters get to have a voice in who is elected. Colorado county clerks encourage voters to return ballots (preferably early), and voters who can cast a meaningful ballot are more likely to return their ballot. Regardless of your party affiliation or (like half of Colorado's voters) lack of affiliation, you will be more empowered under Prop 131 to vote for any candidate in every seat covered under Prop 131.

LWVCO agrees with Senator Bennet that ranking candidates and tabulating those rankings is more "*complicated*" than our current "choose-one" voting method. But this "*complication*" – aka letting people express multiple preferences – is the power of ranked voting! Our current "choose-one" method is simple, but leads to spoiler candidates, vote-splitting and voting for the "*lesser of two evils.*" We should all want our elected officials to be those preferred by as many voters as possible.

Much has been made of the fact that the only other state to use Prop 131's Final-4 Voting is Alaska, and they only started using Final-4 Voting in 2022. However, for over a decade election administrators in California and Washington have successfully conducted all-candidate Top-2 primaries – same ballot format, same tabulation as Prop 131's Top-4 primary. The ranked voting

general-election portion of Final-4 Voting is being used in more places every year, from San Francisco to Minneapolis to New York City to Salt Lake City to Maine and Boulder. Both the primary and the general election portions of Final-4 Voting are well-vetted.

Interestingly, Final-4 Voting passed in Alaska as part of a package with campaign finance reform. Colorado's single-subject constraint for initiatives would preclude such a package from getting on our state's ballot. But LWVCO would welcome a separate bill, referendum or initiative to address the corrupting influence of money in politics.

Colorado has been an election leader in same-day voter registration, vote-by-mail ballots and post-election risk-limiting audits. We could also be a leader in giving voters a meaningful voice in partisan elections. LWVCO supports this election reform and encourages you to vote YES on Prop 131.

*Both authors are longtime members of the League of Women Voters. Neal McBurnett is an election integrity expert who helped Colorado develop its risk-limiting audits and is a member of the Bipartisan Election Advisory Commission (but is speaking in his personal capacity). Celeste Landry worked with bill sponsors on HB19-1278 to ease ballot access for candidates, especially for county offices, and on HB21-1071 for county clerks to conduct instant-runoff voting elections for municipalities.*