

VOTING IN 2010: Ten Swing States

COLORADO

Colorado has become a perennial swing state and there are several very competitive elections happening in the state this year. There have been problems in the past, notably with the improper purging of the voter registration lists in 2008. There is also a very large Latino population in Colorado, and some are concerned about the protection of their voting rights this year.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

- Both the **gubernatorial and senatorial** elections are considered competitive and could be seriously impacted by the Latino vote. The race for **governor** is a three-way contest, featuring former Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper (D), businessman Dan Maes (R), and former US Rep. Tom Tancredo, a Republican-turned-Independent.
- The **Senate** race pits incumbent Michael Bennet (D) against Ken Buck (R) and is considered a toss-up.
- At least two races for the **House of Representatives** are also looking close.

OBSTACLES TO VOTING

- Citizens must **register** no later than 29 days before the election. "Emergency registration" is available for some voters who miss the deadline, but the policy is not comprehensive.
- Election officials do not conduct any **formal outreach for immigrant or language minority voters**, despite the more than 150,000 immigrant citizens and at least 404,000 eligible Latino voters. The Elections **homepage does not offer Spanish** translation.
- Colorado lacks any law directly banning dissemination of deceptive information, leaving the state open to the use of phony flyers as well as online dissemination of misinformation meant to disenfranchise voters.
- **Voting rights** are restored automatically upon release from parole but that information is not effectively conveyed to voters. In fact, the state's website says "no one will tell you when you are eligible to vote."
- Voting may be more difficult for **military and overseas voters** than in other states. Colorado unfortunately requested a waiver of the recently passed federal requirement that absentee ballots be sent out 45 days in advance to overseas voters who have requested them prior to that time and the Department of Justice has denied that request.

EXEMPLARY VOTING LAWS/ PROCEDURES

- When voters' names in the **statewide voter database** do not exactly match data in other databases, and minor errors occur or nicknames are used, officials are authorized to use good judgment and keep the voter registered.
- When voters are given a **provisional ballot**, local election officials must take pro-active steps to verify their eligibility through approved databases or direct follow-up with the voter. Voters are not required to return with documentation.

ARIZONA

COLORADO

ILLINOIS

KENTUCKY

LOUISIANA

MICHIGAN

MISSOURI

NEVADA

NORTH CAROLINA

OHIO

Demos



WHAT THE CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER CAN DO BEFORE THE ELECTION

- Work with community organizations to conduct more voter **outreach to immigrant and language minority voters** and post Spanish language translated information and materials on the website as soon as possible.
- Take extra steps to ensure people have the **correct voting information**, to prevent negative impacts from potential deceptive practices. Establish a clear system for detecting misinformation campaigns and a plan for how the office will respond to them to ensure voters have the true information immediately.
- Educate local election administrators about the law regarding the **voting rights of persons with prior felony convictions**. In conjunction with criminal justice personnel, make greater efforts to educate those with prior felony convictions of their voting rights.
- Make every effort to provide ballots to **overseas and military** voters 45 days prior to the election and educate voters about available registration and ballot receipt options.

In advance of the mid-term elections, Common Cause and Dēmos will release a new report that finds election policies in 10 swing states could disenfranchise voters and impact election results. The report, “Voting in 2010: Ten Swing States,” looks at Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio, summarizing each state’s practices, and providing a set of recommendations for improvement.

To view the full report, visit **demos.org/swingstate**
or **commoncause.org/swingstate**.

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