



EXPLAINER: ELECTION 2024

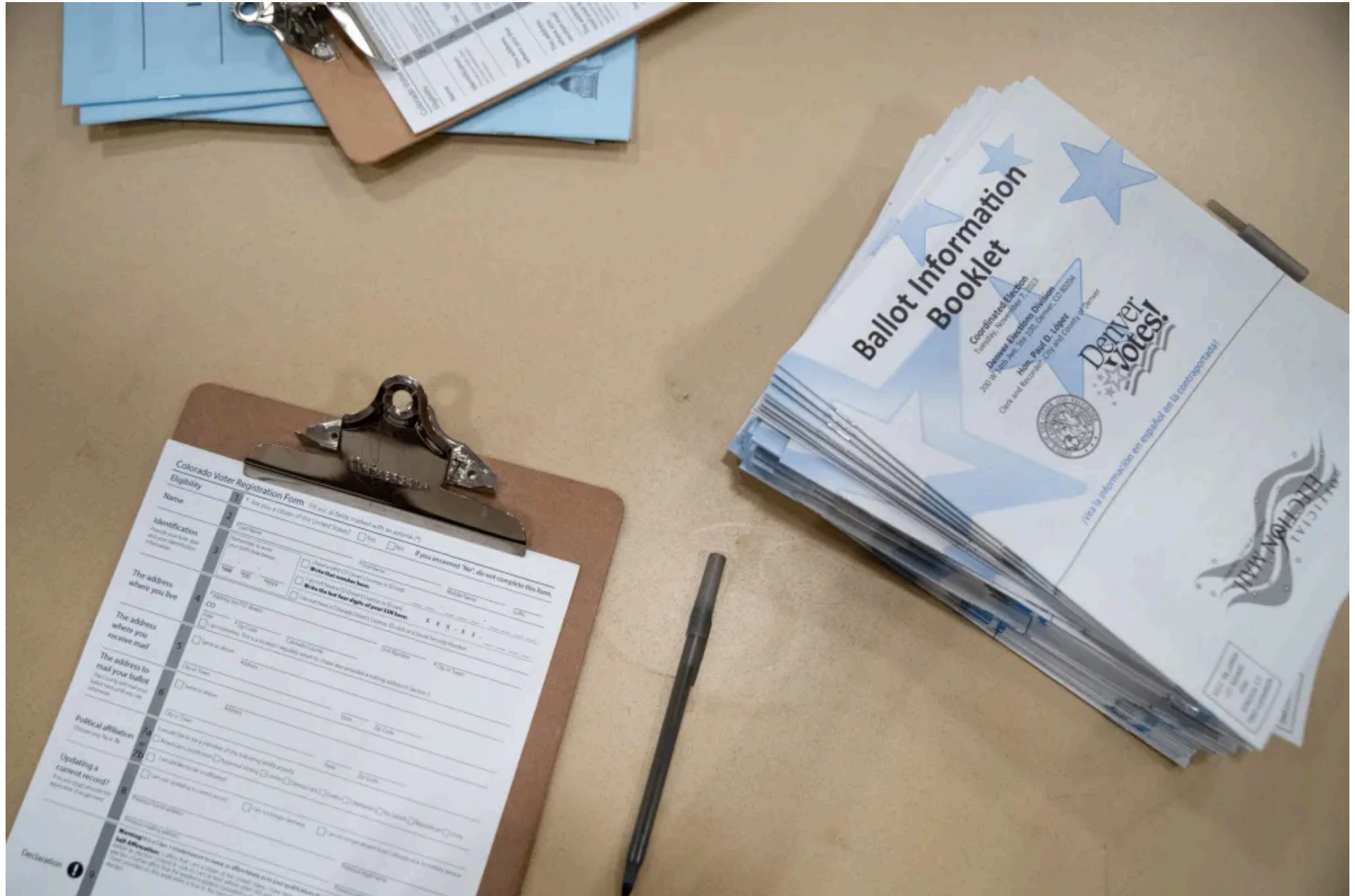
Amendment K: Colorado election officials would have more time to prepare ballots

The constitutional amendment, referred to voters by the state legislature, would move up a number of election deadlines so county clerks have an extra week to get ballots ready to send to voters



Brian Eason

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Voting forms and booklets are seen Nov. 7, 2023, at Christ Church United Methodist in Denver. (Olivia Sun, The Colorado Sun via Report for America)

Colorado voters in November will be asked to move up a number of constitutional filing deadlines for candidates and citizen initiatives to give county clerks more

time to prepare ballots in future elections.

Amendment K, referred to voters by the state legislature **earlier this year**, would amend the state constitution to require supporters of citizen-led ballot initiatives to submit petitions one week earlier in order to qualify for the ballot.

Judges would also have to file their declarations of intent to seek another term a week sooner. If the measure passes, nonpartisan legislative staff would have to publish the text of all the statewide ballot measures in newspapers across Colorado 15 days earlier.

Constitutional amendments require 55% approval to pass.

Here's what else you need to know about Amendment K.

What are the deadlines today and how would they change?

Currently, petitions for citizen-led initiatives and referendums must be submitted three months before Election Day. Judges up for retention have to file their intent to seek another term in office by the same deadline.

If adopted, the amendment would move each of those constitutional deadlines one week earlier — allowing state and local election officials to move on to other parts of the ballot-setting process sooner.

This year's petition deadline was Aug. 5. From there, the clock starts ticking on the rest of the election timeline, which is set in state law. The Colorado Secretary of State's Office has 30 days after that to determine whether the petition signatures are sufficient to make the ballot. This year, state election officials had to finalize the ballot order by Sept. 9, giving county clerks 12 days to get ballots out to military and overseas voters by a Sept. 21 deadline.

Legislative staff also have to publish all statewide ballot measures in newspapers 15 days before an election. The amendment would change the public notice requirement to 30 days in advance.

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Why do election officials want to change the deadlines?

The ballot measure was requested by elections officials.

The existing constitutional and statutory deadlines appear to leave about two weeks after statewide ballot certification for county officials to finalize their local ballots before their next deadline: sending them to military and overseas voters 45 days before the election.

But in practice, the Colorado Clerks Association says the current timeline leaves **about four days** for local election officials to put their ballots together.

The process has gotten increasingly difficult as ballots get longer and more complicated. Today, Colorado has more than 4,000 local taxing districts, many of which overlap with one another. In some counties, that has led clerks to have to print hundreds of different ballot combinations to ensure that each voter gets the right mix of races they're eligible to vote in.

Once the statewide ballot is certified, county officials have to program their databases to tie each race to the correct voters. Then they have to build all the possible ballot combinations and edit them. After that, they have to be translated into different languages and sent off for printing. The printed versions then have to be tested with their election equipment. Any errors they find have to be fixed, reprinted and tested again before the final ballots can be printed and prepared for mailing.

Heightened scrutiny of election integrity — fueled by **right-wing misinformation** — has only raised the stakes for each county to get it right. Meanwhile, **violent threats** have driven many experienced election officials out of the profession, putting further strains on the system.

If it passes, political advocacy groups may have to accelerate their future signature gathering efforts accordingly.

Who is spending money to support and oppose Amendment K?

As of Sept. 27, no campaign committees had been formed to support or oppose Amendment K, according to [the Colorado Secretary of State's Office](#).

[Senate Concurrent Resolution 2](#), the legislation referring the measure to the November ballot, passed the General Assembly 95-1 with broad bipartisan support.

Other resources:

Nonpartisan legislative staff creates a guide for each initiative on the statewide ballot. You can find their analysis of Amendment K [here](#).

You can read the full text of the ballot measure [here](#).