

COLORADO TITLE SETTING BOARD

**IN THE MATTER OF THE TITLE AND BALLOT TITLE AND SUBMISSION CLAUSE
FOR PROPOSED INITIATIVE 2023-2024 #117**

MOTION FOR REHEARING ON PROPOSED INITIATIVE 2023-2024 #117

On behalf of Objector Diana Holland, registered elector of the State of Colorado, the undersigned counsel hereby submits to the Title Board this Motion for Rehearing on Proposed Initiative 2023-2024 #117 (“Initiative #117”) and as grounds therefore state as follows:

I. THE TITLE SET BY TITLE BOARD AT JANUARY 18, 2024 HEARING

On January 18, 2024, the Title Board set the following ballot title and submission clause for Initiative #117:

An amendment to the Colorado constitution creating new election processes for certain state and federal offices, and, in connection therewith, requiring all candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, Colorado state legislature, and certain state offices to collect signatures from any affiliated or unaffiliated Colorado voter to petition onto a single, all-candidate primary election ballot and eliminating the use of political party nomination for these candidates to be listed on the primary ballot; allowing a voter to vote for only one candidate on the primary ballot regardless of political affiliation of the voter or the candidate; allowing the four candidates for each office who receive the most votes, regardless of political affiliation, to advance to the general election; allowing voters to rank, in order of preference, candidates for these offices in the general election; requiring that a vacancy election for the U.S. House of Representatives be conducted by ranked voting; and eliminating the use of vacancy committees selected by political parties to fill certain vacancies in the state legislature and requiring an election to fill such vacancy.

II. GROUNDINGS FOR REHEARING**The Initiative Impermissibly Contains Several Separate and Distinct Subjects in Violation of the Single Subject Requirement.**

Pursuant to Colo. Const. art. V, §1(5.5),

no measure shall be proposed by petition containing more than one subject, which shall be clearly expressed in its title If a measure contains more than one subject, such that a ballot title cannot be fixed that clearly expresses a single

subject, no title shall be set and the measure shall not be submitted to the people for adoption or rejection at the polls.

See also 1-40-106.5, C.R.S. "When a proposed initiative comprises multiple subjects, the [Title] Board lacks jurisdiction to set its title." *Fine v. Ward (In re Titles, Ballot Titles, & Submission Clauses for Proposed Initiatives 2021-2022 #67, #115, & #128)*, 2022 CO 37, ¶8.

The single-subject requirement exists "to prevent or inhibit various inappropriate or misleading practices that might otherwise occur." § 1-40-106.5(1)(d). Specifically, it is designed to prevent "the practice of putting together in one measure subjects having no necessary or proper connection, for the purpose of enlisting in support of the measure the advocates of each measure, and thus securing the enactment of measures that could not be carried upon their merits," § 1-40-106.5(1)(e)(I), and to "prevent surprise and fraud from being practiced upon voters" by ensuring that the title of the measure "apprise the people of the subject," § 1-40-106.5(1)(e)(II).

To meet the single-subject requirement, an initiative's provisions must be "necessarily and properly connected," *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2021-2022 #16*, 2021 CO 55, ¶ 13. An initiative with provisions that are "disconnected or incongruous, —covering more than one subject and having at least two distinct and separate purposes which are not dependent upon or connected with each other, —violates this requirement." *Fine v. Ward*, 2022 CO ¶13 (internal citations omitted).

In *In re 2021-2022 #16*, the Colorado Supreme Court explained that it "must examine sufficiently an initiative's central theme to determine whether it contains hidden purposes under a broad theme." ¶ 21. The Court stated that its "concern was that two disconnected provisions could be described as a single subject if done at a sufficiently high level of generality. *Id.* In that case, the Court considered whether provisions of an initiative that not only expanded the definition of "animal cruelty" but also expanded the definition of "sexual act with an animal" each related to the "central theme of expanding the animal cruelty statutes to include livestock." *Id.* at ¶¶ 22-23. The Court concluded that, "although related when considered at a high level of generality, the provisions served different purposes not sufficiently connected to constitute a single subject." *Id.* at ¶ 41.

Initiative #117 suffers the same problem. Under the broad guise of "new voting processes to expand voter choice" per the proponents' stated single subject, or the equally overbroad "creating new election processes for certain state and federal offices" per the single subject clause in the initial title set by the Title Board, the measure proposes sweeping, but incongruous, changes to primary elections and to general elections. First, for primary elections, Initiative #117 eliminates political party primaries and establishes an all-candidate primary election ballot, where all candidates of all political parties are placed on the same ballot, and voters may vote for only one candidate on the primary ballot regardless of political affiliation of the voter or the candidate. The measure requires that only the four primary candidates who receive the most votes, regardless of political affiliation, advance to the general election. This type of primary, often called a blanket primary or jungle primary, (hereinafter "blanket primary"), can result in only candidates from one political party moving on to the general

election, and can reduce the chances that unaffiliated candidates or candidates from a minor political party can make the general election ballot.¹ The measure eliminates political party primaries in favor of all-candidate primaries and directs the method of voting for primary elections (voters vote for one candidate only).

Next, for the general election, Initiative #117 changes the method of voting for general elections for all federal and some, but not all, state candidates to instant run-off voting, (“IRV”), instead of voters voting for one candidate. This new election model directs voters to rank the candidates who advanced to the general election in order of preference. In an IRV election, ballots are initially counted to establish the number of votes for each candidate. If a candidate has more than half of the first-choice votes, that candidate wins. If not, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and the voters who selected that candidate as their first choice have their votes added to the total of the candidate who was their next choice. That process continues until one candidate has more than half of the votes, and that person is declared the winner.

The use of IRV in Colorado elections has been a topic of legislative and public debate for years.² There are strong proponents and opponents of IRV.³ Although Colorado law presently allows municipalities to use IRV, *see* C.R.S. §1-7-1001 *et seq.*, some cities have rejected it to date.⁴ The use of IRV in general elections is not interrelated to the transition to blanket primary elections.

A change to the primary election from one where the winning candidate from each of the two major political parties, along with any other qualified unaffiliated or minor party candidates, can advance to the general election, to a new blanket primary model where only the top four vote-getters in the primary election advance, is also a charged subject.⁵ Critics contend that this type of primary will result in less ballot access for minor political party and unaffiliated candidates, and reduce the number of candidates in the general election leading to less voter choice.⁶ The use of a blanket primary is not interrelated to the transition to IRV in some general elections.⁷ Both of these changes to election law could stand on their own and are not dependent upon the other.

Indeed, there is no “necessary or proper connection” between these two separate policy changes. § 1-40-106.5(1)(e)(I), C.R.S. Initiative #117 overhauls the primary system process

¹[If Nevada Had Top-Five in Place in 2022, Minor Parties Would Have Almost Surely Been Off the Ballot for Governor and U.S. Senator | Ballot Access News \(ballot-access.org\); 117PublicCommentTemplin.pdf \(state.co.us\); 119PublicCommentTemplin.pdf \(state.co.us\).](#)

²[r21-1348_rcv_memo.pdf \(colorado.gov\)](#), December 21, 2021.

³[Ranked Choice Voting for Colorado – More Choice, More Voice \(rcvforcolorado.org\); Study: Ranked Choice Voting Diminishes Minority Voting \(dailysignal.com\)](#), January 16, 2024.

⁴[What is ranked-choice voting? Election system gets new push in Denver \(denverpost.com\)](#), April 17, 2023.

⁵[ANALYSIS: California’s ‘jungle primary’ has unintended consequences for Democrats - ABC News \(go.com\)](#), June 3, 2018.

⁶[117PublicCommentTemplin.pdf \(state.co.us\); 119PublicCommentTemplin.pdf \(state.co.us\)](#)

⁷ Notably, Colorado already has an open primary that permits unaffiliated voters to vote in either the Democratic or Republican Party primary. *See* C.R.S. §1-7-201(2.3).

with the stated effect of eliminating political party involvement in the primary system—another highly contentious policy change, and combines it with the potentially more voter-friendly change of IRV in the general election. This changes the current method of political parties choosing their candidate via a primary election; and makes major changes to the general election process, including how many candidates can appear on the general election ballot, how they are counted, and abandoning plurality requirements for winners. These policies are not interrelated, nor is one an implementing provision of the other. *See Earnest v. Gorman (In re Title, Ballot Title and Submission Clause for 2009-2010 # 45)*, 234 P.3d 642, 646 (Colo. 2010) ("An initiative may contain several purposes, but they must be interrelated . . . Implementing provisions that are directly tied to the initiative's central focus are not separate subjects."). Rather, these two public policies are mutually exclusive and independent of one another—yet contained under the vague and overbroad umbrella of “elections.” Initiative #117 could be split into two separate ballot measures and these two subjects would still function as the proponents intend, underscoring why they contain no “necessary or proper connection.” Instead, they are two highly complex policy changes regarding separate types of elections lumped together under the same broad title.

It is the inclusion of both subjects in one initiative that “is precisely the logrolling dilemma that the voters intended to avoid when they adopted the [single-subject] requirements.” *In re Title, Ballot Title, & Submission Clause for 2011-2012 #3*, 2012 CO 25, ¶ 31 (Hobbs, J., dissenting). A central purpose of the single-subject requirement is that it “precludes the joining together of multiple subjects into a single initiative in the hope of attracting support from various factions which may have different or even conflicting interests.” *In re Proposed Initiative “Public Rights in Waters II”*, 898 P.2d 1076, 1079 (Colo. 1995). As members of the Title Board recognized at the initial hearing, even while ultimately setting title for this Initiative, some voters might well support IRV elections while preferring to keep primary elections as they are, and others might feel precisely the opposite. The mere fact that both topics involve “election processes” is not enough to make them necessarily and properly connected.⁸

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, Objector requests a rehearing of the Title Board for Initiative 2023-2024 #117 because the initiative contains multiple subjects. As a result, the Title Board lacks jurisdiction to set a title and should reject the measure in its entirety.

⁸ Proponents contend that because a prior Title Board previously titled a measure, Proposed Initiative 2013-2014 #112, containing a variation on the blanket primary and ranked choice voting in certain elections, this somehow demonstrates single subject approval or constitutes *res judicata*. But that measure was never challenged at rehearing or at the Colorado Supreme Court, nor did the proponents submit petitions or gain access to the 2014 ballot. The existence of a title for #112 has no meaningful relevance to whether Initiative #117 contains a single subject.

Respectfully submitted this 25th day of January, 2024.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that on the 25th day of January 2024, a true and correct copy of **MOTION FOR REHEARING ON PROPOSED INITIATIVE 2023-2024 #117** was filed and served on Proponents Charles Duke and Robert Lynn Moreland, via email to their counsel of record as follows:

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