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A Democracy We Can Believe In

Secretary of State Jena Griswold's 2019 Policy Agenda on Elections and Campaign Finance

Our state deserves a democracy that all Coloradans can believe in and trust. Every eligible Coloradan—Republican, Democrat, and Independent, alike—deserves to have their voice heard. We believe that improving the voting experience for eligible Coloradans is at the heart of building that trust.

Colorado has the best voting model in the country, where every eligible voter receives a ballot at home and can conveniently return it in the mail, at a drop off location, or can also vote in person at a Voter Service & Polling Center (VSPC). Just over 90% of our eligible voters are registered to vote, which is the highest of any state in the country. And in 2018, we had 63% turnout of eligible voters, which was the second highest in the nation. We have a track record to be proud of, but our work is not done. We can increase voter registration rates, enhance and improve our systems, and reduce long lines on Election Day. To ensure a stronger democracy in our state, we can and should create the very best election system possible.

To have a strong democracy, everyday Coloradans' voices must both be heard in elections and not drowned out by the massive and often secret political spending we see in elections. We need meaningful campaign finance reform now. This is imperative to combat secret political spending on negative and misleading advertising; to ensure voters have confidence in their elected officials; and to ensure that foreign countries do not influence our domestic elections through political spending. It is time to strengthen our state's laws and be a national leader in ensuring that Colorado's democracy truly belongs to the people.

Our Policy Priorities Include:

Expanding Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) in Colorado: In Colorado, voters can register to vote or update their registration at drivers license offices. The current AVR program should be improved and expanded beyond drivers license offices to be more accessible for more Coloradans to register to vote. We will:

- Improve our current system of automatically registering and updating eligible voters at drivers license offices; and
- Expand AVR to allow citizens to securely register when they visit other state agencies.

Election Access: While every Coloradan receives a mail ballot, in 2018 over 120,000 voters relied on a VSPC to register to vote, update their voter registration, or vote in person. Using data collected from previous elections, we will work to improve our VSPC model to prevent long lines and increase access for all voters. We will:

- Explore opening VSPCs on the Sunday before Election Day, extending voting hours, and requiring VSPCs on college campuses;
- Require state-of-the-art cybersecurity protections for our elections; and
- Adjust the current allocation of drop boxes and VSPCs to improve voting accessibility and ease.

Campaign Finance Transparency: To put our democracy back in the hands of everyday Coloradans, we should ensure that every citizen knows who is trying to influence their vote and how they are doing it. We will work to shine light on secret political spending through stronger disclosure, by addressing coordination between candidates and special interests, and by strengthening our enforcement and oversight of all who engage in political activity in our state. We will:

- Require disclosure of secret political spending, expand the “paid for by” disclosure requirements on political advertisements, and exercise the Secretary of State’s audit and enforcement power to act on campaign finance, ballot access, and lobbyist violations;
- Prevent potential candidates from raising millions of dollars in unchecked and uncapped contributions into “independent” committees designed to support them when they officially declare their candidacy;
- Ensure that independent expenditure and other committees can be held accountable for campaign finance violations; and
- Work to end the influence of powerful interest groups and lobbyists over candidates and elected officials through contributions to political entities.

We are driven by the mission that Colorado be the best place for democratic participation in the country. This agenda will ensure Coloradans’ voices be heard.