

Initiative 362: Mail Ballot Voter Identification

Placed on the ballot by citizen initiative • Passes with 55 percent of the vote

Initiative 362 proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to:

- require voters to provide identification information, in addition to their signature, for their mail ballots to be counted.

What Your Vote Means

YES

A “yes” vote on Initiative 362 requires voters to provide identification information with their mail ballot, in addition to their signature.

NO

A no” vote on Initiative 362 continues the current signature-only verification system for mail ballots.

Summary and Analysis of Initiative 362

What does this measure do?

For federal and statewide elections, the measure requires voters to include the last four digits of a government-issued identification number when submitting their mail ballot. Acceptable forms of identification are a social security number, a Colorado driver’s license number, or a Colorado identification card number. Any form of Colorado identification provided must be compliant with the federal Real ID law. This new verification process created by the measure is in addition to the current signature verification process for mail ballots.

If a voter’s identification information is missing or cannot be matched to the state voter registration database, the county election office must contact the voter to tell them how to correct the discrepancy. Consistent with the existing signature verification process, the ballot will not be counted unless the voter takes steps within eight days of election day to confirm their identify. Specifically, a voter may submit a copy of one of the forms of identification allowed under the measure. Alternately, a voter may provide a copy of a U.S. passport, a U.S. military identification card, or a tribal photo identification card. During this process, identification may be provided in-person or digitally. Voters with qualifying physical disabilities or elderly voters who are entitled under federal law to vote by mail may submit a broader range of acceptable forms of identification.

What is the role of mail ballots in Colorado elections?

Every Colorado voter receives a mail ballot for federal and statewide elections. Coloradans can vote by returning their mail ballot at a drop box or through the mail, or they may vote in person

at any voter service and polling center in their county. In 2024, 92 percent of all ballots cast in Colorado were mail ballots, most of which were returned to a drop box.

How are mail ballots verified under current law?

Colorado currently uses signature verification to determine that mail ballots come from eligible voters. When a voter returns a mail ballot, they must sign the envelope. Once the ballot is received by the county election office, the signature on the envelope is then compared to the voter's signature on file from election and driver's license records. If a signature discrepancy is found, the signature is then reviewed by two election judges of different political parties. If they both agree that the signature likely does not belong to the voter, the county election office must contact the voter to have them confirm their identity and that they submitted the ballot. If the voter does not confirm their identity within eight days after election day, the ballot is not counted.

Does the measure affect the allowable forms of identification for in-person voting?

No. The measure does not change the forms of identification that may be presented when voting in person at a voter service and polling center. The allowable forms of identification for in-person voting are broader than those required for mail ballots under this measure, including documents that show a person's name and address.

Argument For Initiative 362

1) Additional voter verification for mail ballots strengthens election security while preserving convenient access to voting. Government-issued identification documents are more consistent and less subjective than the current signature verification process. Most voters already have an eligible identification card, or know their social security number. If a voter does not have one of the required forms of identification to complete their mail ballot, they can choose to vote in person using several identification options. Adding a convenient form of additional verification for mail ballots promotes public confidence that fraudulently submitted ballots will not be counted.

Argument Against Initiative 362

1) The measure adds an unnecessary burden to voting that may result in eligible voters' ballots not being counted, without meaningfully improving election security. The current signature verification process is effective, secure, and convenient for voters, and it successfully identifies the rare cases where individuals attempt to fraudulently submit a mail ballot. The measure creates an additional barrier to voting and could deprive eligible citizens of their right to vote due to simple mistakes when submitting their ballot.

Information about the organizations supporting and opposing this measure is available on the Colorado Secretary of State's website:

www.coloradosos.gov/pubs/elections/Initiatives/ballot/contacts/2026.html

Fiscal Impact of Initiative 362

The initiative will increase state and local spending by up to \$2.7 million in the initial budget year 2026-27, and \$1.2 million annually in future years for voter outreach, printing, and election staff to verify voter information. These costs will be divided between state and local governments as discussed below.

Local Government Spending

The new verification process under the measure will increase county spending by up to \$2.5 million in the 2026-27 budget year and up to \$1.2 million in future years. About 45 percent of these county costs will be reimbursed by the state government. These costs are driven from several new requirements under the measure. First, election judges must review identification numbers provided by voters, which will increase staffing hours and overtime during elections. Second, county election offices must notify voters of any discrepancies involving their identification information, which will require sending a postcard or digital notification to voters and segregating ballots until valid identification is provided. Lastly, county election offices will also be required to update ballot materials and envelopes, modify various elections systems, and conduct voter outreach.

State Spending

The Department of State will have increased costs to inform voters of the changes to mail voting across the state and to reimburse counties. Specifically, the department will need to conduct an outreach and communication campaign at a cost of \$100,000 in state budget year 2026-27 and \$200,000 in state budget year 2027-28. The department will also have ongoing workload and costs for outreach and printed materials estimated at \$20,000 for each presidential primary, statewide primary, and general election. As discussed above, the state will also have costs to reimburse counties for a portion of their costs under the measure. This reimbursement is estimated to be up to \$1.1 million in during the 2026-27 budget year, and up to \$500,000 for in future years.

State Revenue

To cover the costs in the Department of State discussed above, business filing fees will need to be raised to cover all or some of the costs of this measure. The fees affected, the timing of any increase, and the actual amount of fee charges will be set administratively by the department based on its available fund balance and total program costs.