

Initiative 256: Requirements for Off-Cycle Congressional Redistricting

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

Initiative 256 proposes amending the Colorado Constitution to:

- require the Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission and the Colorado Supreme Court to review and approve any proposed changes to congressional districts outside of a scheduled redistricting year; and
- prohibit off-cycle changes to congressional districts that intentionally favor any political party or unnecessarily divides communities.

What Your Vote Means

YES

A “yes” vote on Initiative 256 requires the Colorado Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission to approve any new congressional districts proposed outside of a scheduled redistricting year.

NO

A “no” vote on Initiative 256 continues the current requirements for changing congressional districts every ten years.

Summary and Analysis of Initiative 256

What is congressional redistricting?

Colorado currently has eight congressional districts, which are regions of the state divided to be equal in population and meet other criteria. One person is elected from each of the eight districts to represent Colorado in the U.S. House of Representatives. Congressional redistricting is the process of dividing the state into congressional districts. It usually occurs after a census, which is when all the people in the United States are counted every ten years. Using the state’s population of 5.8 million as of the 2020 census, the current required congressional district population size is 721,714 people.

How is redistricting done in Colorado?

In 2018, Colorado voters amended the Colorado Constitution to create the Colorado Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission (commission). Every ten years, a new commission is formed and is charged with using the population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, specific legal criteria, and public input from around the state to draw Colorado’s congressional districts. The last commission was formed and completed its work in 2021, and the next commission will meet and create new districts in 2031.

What does Initiative 256 do?

Initiative 256 requires that any off-cycle changes to congressional districts be approved by the commission and adopted by the Colorado Supreme Court. Before approving any changes, the commission must hold at least three public hearings. The measure also prohibits off-cycle changes to congressional districts that intentionally favor a political party or unnecessarily divide communities of interest. Off-cycle redistricting includes any changes to congressional districts that are not made by the commission following a census.

Arguments For Initiative 256

- 1) This measure provides public participation in any off-cycle changes to congressional districts and ensures that changes are reviewed through a fair and transparent process. Off-cycle redistricting proposals should comply with the same standards that apply during the regular redistricting process. This includes requiring the commission to evaluate proposed changes, hold public hearings, refrain from favoring any single political party, and submit any revised maps for judicial review.

Arguments Against Initiative 256

- 1) In the future, if voters want to conduct off-cycle redistricting due to changes in their political priorities or other concerns with Colorado's congressional districts, the existing redistricting commission should not play a role in this process. If voters feel that the districts created by the commission during the regularly scheduled redistricting no longer meet the needs of the state, that same commission should not be allowed to delay and obstruct the will of the voters.

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 256

State Spending

The measure increases costs in the Legislative Department by about \$370,000 in any year that the commission must convene and review changes to congressional maps outside of its usual redistricting schedule. The costs are to staff the commission, provide reimbursement for commissioners, and hire legal counsel. The Judicial Department will also have a small workload increase to review any new maps.