



VOTER VOICES= MAJORITY CHOICES

Modernizing Denver's At-Large Elections

Sponsored by Denver City Council Members

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TWO CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED

Plurality election method doesn't require winners to achieve a majority of the vote

- Every elected official in Denver, except for the at-large council members, must be elected by greater than 50% of the vote
- At-large winners have averaged less than one-third of the total vote

Two winners on same ballot has led to significantly more undervoting in at-large than in all other races

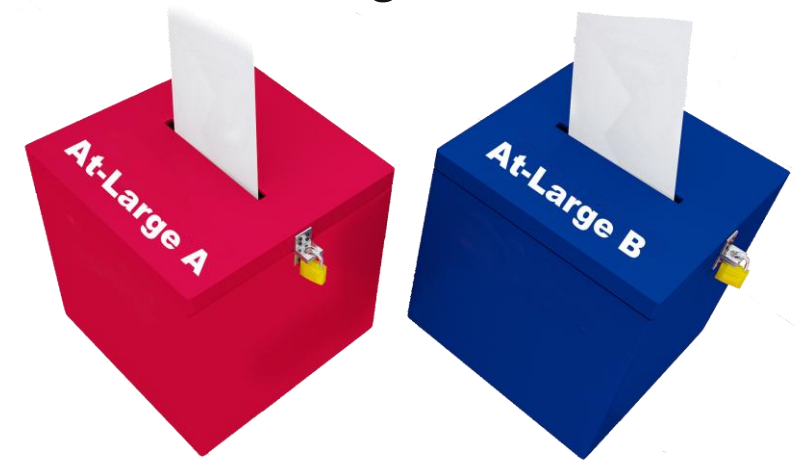
- Voting data show undervoting in the at-large race exceeds all other races by a substantial margin of wasted votes, particularly among voters not using their second vote on the single ballot
- This proposal ends this structural issue and results in majority winners



THE PROPOSAL

Place the two at-large seats on separate ballots

- Officials who are elected to represent a citywide constituency should be elected by a citywide majority
- Instead of voting for both at-large members on a single ballot, voters would choose them separately on individual ballots – At-Large A and At-Large B
- This ensures each at-large winner gets more than 50% of the vote, like our City Charter requires of all other citywide electeds – mayor, auditor, clerk and recorder



ORIGINAL INTENT FOR AT-LARGE SEATS

Voters approved two-round elections for at-large seats

- **1968:** Voters passed two key election changes:
 - Amendment 3: Expanded City Council from 9 to 13 seats, with 11 district seats and two new at-large seats
 - Amendment 4: Changed from nonpartisan to partisan elections, with Democratic and Republican precinct caucuses and assemblies, leading to May party primaries and June general elections
 - Both amendments were intended to work together in the upcoming 1971 municipal election



ORIGINAL INTENT, CONTINUED

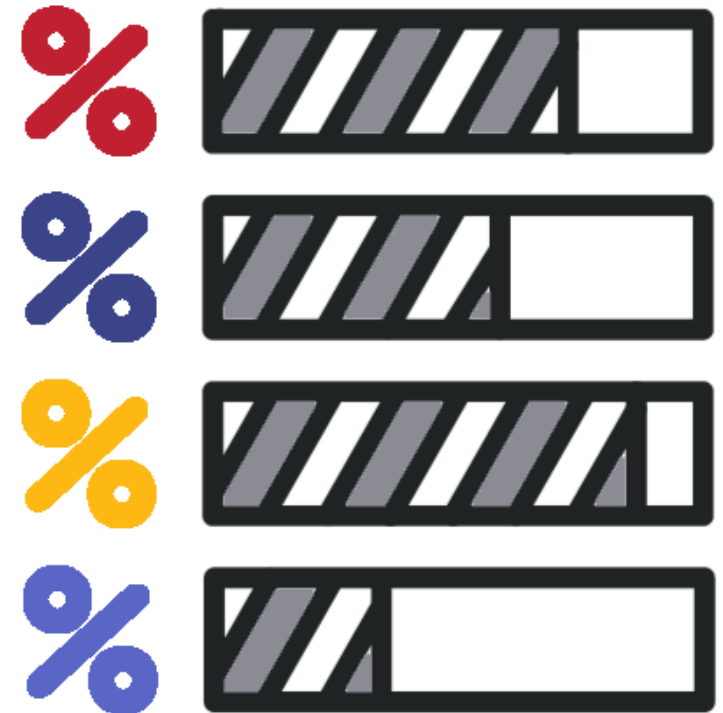
- **Legal Challenge:** Three residents sued, arguing that partisan elections and ballot title violated the state constitution
 - Colorado Supreme Court struck down partisan elections amendment, leaving Amendment 3 standing but without a method for electing two at-large seats on a single ballot
- **Result:** With the rules for filling the new at-large seats thrown out, a Denver District Court judge ordered the city to default to state election method allowing plurality winners
 - These court decisions resulted in today's dual-voting system, which this amendment aims to bring back into alignment



ACHIEVE A MAJORITY OF THE VOTE

Require at-large winners to win more than 50% of the vote

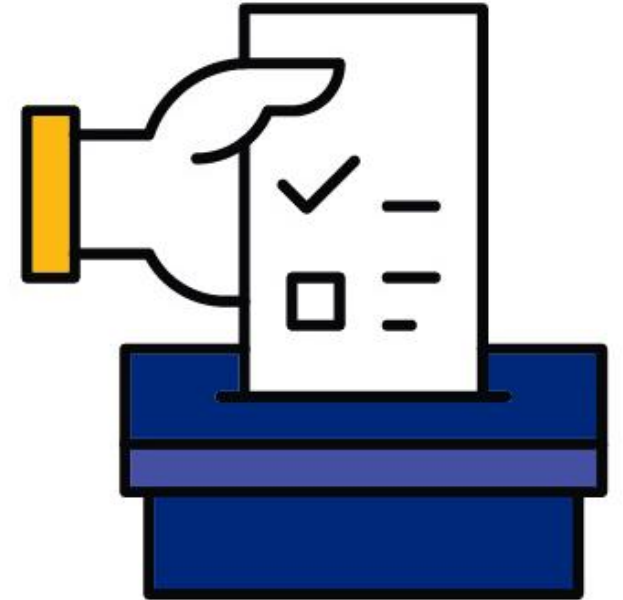
- This amendment ensures all citywide officials win majority support of citywide voters
- It restores the original intent that the at-large seats go through a two-round election process for a majority win
- In the nine elections since 1991, at-large winners have won with vote percentages ranging from 16.6% to 38.9%, with the first-place average of 32.77%, and second place average of 24.41%
- Judges should not decide how Denver elects its at-large members



PEER CITIES REVIEW OF ELECTION METHODS

33 of the 100 largest U.S. cities have at-large members

- **25** use a two-round election system
 - **9** cities require at-large members to win by a majority
 - **16** cities make majority wins more likely with two-round systems, as Denver uses for all other elected offices
- **11** cities have at-large candidates run on separate ballots
- Only **6** other cities use single-ballot plurality voting for their at-large members with no requirement for a majority win



Questions and Discussion

