

The Colorado Voting Rights Act

The Colorado Voting Rights Act (COVRA) is a new state law designed to protect fair and equal access to elections

What is the COVRA?

- The **Colorado Voting Rights Act (COVRA)** is a state law that ensures fair and equal access to elections.
- Created to protect communities that have faced historic discrimination and underrepresentation.
- Fills gaps left by weakened federal protections, going further than federal law to protect voting rights.

Who Does the COVRA Protect?

COVRA strengthens voting rights for all by addressing barriers faced by the most impacted groups.

Communities historically excluded from local government, including:

- Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American, and immigrant voters
- Voters who speak languages other than English
- LGBTQ+ voters
- Eligible voters held in county jails
- Voters with disabilities

What Does The COVRA Do?

The COVRA Prohibits Vote Suppression and Vote Dilution

- Voter Suppression
 - When rules, actions, or inaction by a governing body or election administrator make it harder for certain groups to vote, AND an alternative exists that could lessen the harm.
- Vote Dilution
 - When people's votes don't carry as much weight, not because they're blocked from voting, but because the election setup weakens them.

The COVRA Requires Multilingual Ballots in Local Elections.

- If a municipality is wholly or partly within a county required by state law to provide multilingual ballot access, the same requirement applies whether the election is coordinated with the county or run independently.
- This includes ballots, voting instructions, and voting notices and other outreach materials.

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How does the COVRA work?

If a person or organization believes a local government has violated the Colorado Voting Rights Act by they can file a lawsuit in state court.

- **Step 1:** Recognize a potential violation (suppression, dilution, or accessibility barriers).
- **Step 2:** Send notice to local officials, suggesting a resolution.
- **Step 3:** If unresolved, file a lawsuit in state court.

The Colorado Attorney General can also investigate, join, or bring lawsuits to enforce the law.

What Remedies Can Courts Order?

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How Can You Use the COVRA?

1. Recognize a Violation

- Barriers to voting or unfair districts may signal voter suppression or vote dilution.

2. Notify Local Officials

- Send a letter explaining the issue and suggesting a fix.
- The government has **90–135 days** to respond or resolve it.

3. File a Lawsuit (if unresolved)

- Individuals, groups, or organizations can file in **state court**.
- No proof of intent required—only unfair impact.
- Courts review data, maps, and community testimony.

If a Violation Is Found

- Courts can order:
 - New district maps
 - More polling places or extended hours
 - Translated materials or new election dates
 - Public input on changes
- Court orders override state or local law.

Legal Costs Under COVRA

- Voters can seek justice **without major financial risk**.
- If resolved outside court: **Government covers most costs**.
- If you win: **Local government pays your legal fees**.
- If you lose: **No costs owed** unless the case is frivolous.