



Friend,

Many of you have reached out to me with questions about **Initiative 131**. This ballot issue would fundamentally transform Colorado's best-in-the-nation system of elections. In my view, we are being asked to throw out our excellent system without any persuasive reason to believe the new one will actually be better and with real risk that dark money will play an even more destructive role in our democracy.

Colorado has spent decades building our exceptional voting system on principles of security, accessibility, and transparency. Initiative 131 adds significant complexity and uncertainty to our elections, which is why many Colorado county clerks and election administrators oppose it. These officials have borne the brunt of election turmoil and security threats in recent years. The last thing they need is to absorb a radical overhaul of our elections without their having been adequately consulted.

Whether you consider yourself a Republican, Democratic, or Unaffiliated voter, BEFORE YOU VOTE, please ask your friends, family, or co-workers whether they can describe to you how the new system will work. It's really complicated, but let me make my best attempt: Initiative 131 would replace Colorado's system with an election that would feature all candidates in a single race – Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The top four finishers of that race would then compete in a second election, where voters would rank the four candidates in preference order. The ultimate winner would be selected according to a weighted tabulation known as "ranked choice voting."

Backers of Initiative 131 claim their proposed system will reduce partisanship, increase competitiveness, and deliver more choices to voters. I have said that ranked-choice voting in some form, and in some elections, could have a beneficial effect. But, ranked-choice voting is new and comes in many forms. I

am unconvinced that the largely untested, extreme version we have been asked to consider will work in Colorado – or anywhere else. Much of the political discussion about how it will function is based on theory and guesses, not the experience of actual voters. At a minimum, Coloradans deserve to know how this system will *actually* work before we choose to adopt it.

Colorado, with its excellent existing system and strong voter turnout, should not be the guinea pig for interests pursuing their own experiments. The proponents of Initiative 131 should practice on a different state with a broken election system, not Colorado. Then, we could at least learn from their experience before being asked to transform our own elections. The only states with systems remotely similar to the one proposed on our ballot are Maine and Alaska, which are not comparable to Colorado. Alaska, after all, is only the size of Denver. Maine is not much bigger. And, in any case, it is much too early to tell what lessons, if any, we should draw from their experiences with the new systems.

Much more important, Initiative 131 risks handing even more power to wealthy donors at the expense of Colorado voters. Since *Citizens United*, our nation's elections have been flooded with almost \$3 billion in dark money. Colorado is no exception. This deluge of money mocks the principle of one person, one vote and threatens to shred our exercise in self-government.

Initiative 131 would make the situation even worse. Campaign infrastructure – including get-out-the-vote operations and volunteer recruitment, among other activities provided by Colorado's political parties as well as other grassroots organizations – would be eviscerated in favor of dark money. Dismantling this grassroots infrastructure in an environment swamped by a completely unregulated and unaccountable system of campaign finance will ultimately cause Coloradans to lose control of our own elections. Special interests, wealthy donors, and super PACs will be enabled (even more than they already are) to run candidates of their choice – without the vetting that our current system provides.

Ironically, the campaign underlying Initiative 131 itself illustrates the dangers of our out-of-control campaign finance system. Coloradans have had no opportunity to debate meaningfully this transformation of our elections or the chance to think through the unintended consequences of these far-reaching changes. Instead, we have been battered by a one-sided barrage of millions of dollars of TV

advertisements to persuade us to abandon our current, world-class election system for an untested experiment. In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, we should be deeply concerned that once our elections are changed, they might be changed forever.

For all these reasons, I will be voting against Initiative 131. Like you, I love Colorado, and if it passes I will do everything in my power to ensure Colorado retains an accessible voting system. No matter what happens in this election, I look forward to working with you to put an end to the corrosive effect of money in our politics.

My very best,

Michael

P.S. Let's make sure that we all vote!!

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