

First Regular Session  
Seventy-first General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 17-0608.01 Kate Meyer x4348

HOUSE BILL 17-1281

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HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Singer,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Kefalas,

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House Committees

State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

Senate Committees

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A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING THE OPTIONAL USE OF ALTERNATIVE VOTING METHODS

102 BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NONPARTISAN ELECTIONS.

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Bill Summary

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)*

"Approval voting" is a method of voting that allows an elector to cast a vote for as many of the candidates per office as the elector chooses. The winner of each office is the candidate who receives the most votes or, for elections in which multiple candidates fill open seats, the winners are those candidates, in a number equal to the number of seats being filled, attaining the greatest number of votes.

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.*  
*Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

The bill authorizes cities, towns, counties, cities and counties, school districts, and special districts (collectively, "local governments") to conduct nonpartisan elections using approval voting on and after November 1, 2017. A nonpartisan election is an election in which the political party affiliations of candidates are not printed on the ballot.

The secretary of state is directed to adopt rules and provide advice to local governments regarding approval voting and to submit a report by February 15, 2020, regarding approval voting to the state, veterans, and military affairs committees of the general assembly.

County clerk and recorders may decline to coordinate an election if a local government elects to employ approval voting in the election.

The bill makes necessary modifications to current law occasioned by the use of approval voting, such as excluding approval voting from the definition of "overvote" and adjusting provisions prescribing the form of ballots and automatic recount triggers.

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2           **SECTION 1.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 1-1-104, **amend**  
3 (23.4) as follows:

4           **1-1-104. Definitions.** As used in this code, unless the context  
5 otherwise requires:

6           (23.4) "Overvote" means the selection by an elector of more  
7 names than there are persons to be elected to an office or the designation  
8 of more than one answer to a ballot question or ballot issue. "OVERVOTE"  
9 DOES NOT INCLUDE APPROVAL VOTING, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 1-7-1102  
10 (1).

11           **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 1-5-407, **amend** (2)  
12 and (3) as follows:

13           **1-5-407. Form of ballots.** (2) The ballots shall be printed so as  
14 to give to each eligible elector a clear opportunity to designate his or her  
15 choice of candidates, joint candidates, ballot issues, and ballot questions  
16 by a mark as instructed. On the ballot may be printed words that will aid  
17 the elector, such as "vote for not more than one" OR, FOR AN ELECTION

1 CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING PURSUANT TO PART 11 OF ARTICLE  
2 7 OF THIS TITLE 1, "VOTE FOR ONE OR MORE".

3 (3) (a) At the end of the list of candidates for each different office  
4 shall be one or more blank spaces in which the elector may write the  
5 name of any eligible person not printed on the ballot who has filed an  
6 affidavit of intent of write-in candidate pursuant to section 1-4-1101.  
7 EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (3)(b) OF THIS SECTION, the number  
8 of spaces provided ~~shall be~~ IS the lesser of the number of eligible electors  
9 who have properly filed an affidavit of intent of write-in candidate  
10 pursuant to section 1-4-1101 or the number of persons to be elected to the  
11 office. No such blank spaces ~~shall~~ WILL be provided if no eligible elector  
12 properly filed an affidavit of intent of write-in candidate.

13 (b) FOR AN ELECTION CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING  
14 PURSUANT TO PART 11 OF ARTICLE 7 OF THIS TITLE 1, THE NUMBER OF  
15 BLANK SPACES PROVIDED IN WHICH AN ELECTOR MAY WRITE IN THE NAME  
16 OF A WRITE-IN CANDIDATE IS THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ELECTORS WHO  
17 PROPERLY FILED AN AFFIDAVIT OF INTENT PURSUANT TO SECTION  
18 1-4-1101.

19 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 1-7-116, **add** (6) as  
20 follows:

21 **1-7-116. Coordinated elections - definition.** (6) A COUNTY  
22 CLERK AND RECORDER MAY, IN HIS OR HER DISCRETION, DECLINE TO  
23 COORDINATE AN ELECTION FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AS DEFINED IN  
24 SECTION 1-7-1102 (2), IF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS ELECTED TO USE  
25 APPROVAL VOTING PURSUANT TO PART 11 OF THIS ARTICLE 7.

26 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 11 to article  
27 7 of title 1 as follows:

1 PART 11

2 APPROVAL VOTING

3 **1-7-1101. Short title.** THE SHORT TITLE OF THIS PART 11 IS THE  
4 "APPROVAL VOTING ACT".

5 **1-7-1102. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS PART 11, UNLESS THE  
6 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

7 (1) "APPROVAL VOTING" MEANS A METHOD OF VOTING IN WHICH:

8 (a) AN ELECTOR MAY CAST A VOTE FOR AS MANY OF THE  
9 CANDIDATES PER OFFICE AS THE ELECTOR CHOOSES; AND

10 (b) THE WINNER OF EACH OFFICE IS THE CANDIDATE WHO RECEIVES  
11 THE MOST VOTES.

12 (2) "LOCAL GOVERNMENT" MEANS A CITY, TOWN, COUNTY, CITY  
13 AND COUNTY, SCHOOL DISTRICT, PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT CREATED  
14 PURSUANT TO PART 5 OF ARTICLE 20 OF TITLE 30, OR A SPECIAL DISTRICT  
15 CREATED PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 1 OF TITLE 32.

16 **1-7-1103. Approval voting authorized - when.** (1) A LOCAL  
17 GOVERNMENT MAY CONDUCT AN ELECTION USING APPROVAL VOTING IF:

18 (a) THE ELECTION IN WHICH APPROVAL VOTING IS EMPLOYED IS A  
19 NONPARTISAN ELECTION;

20 (b) USE OF APPROVAL VOTING IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS NOT  
21 PROHIBITED BY THE CHARTER OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT;

22 (c) THE ELECTION IS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS PART  
23 11 AND THE RULES ADOPTED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE PURSUANT TO  
24 SECTION 1-7-1105; AND

25 (d) THE ELECTION IS CONDUCTED WITH A SYSTEM OF CASTING,  
26 RECORDING, AND TABULATING VOTES THAT IS CAPABLE OF CONDUCTING  
27 THE ELECTION USING APPROVAL VOTING AND THAT HAS BEEN CERTIFIED

1 BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

2 (2) APPROVAL VOTING MAY BE UTILIZED IN ELECTIONS  
3 CONDUCTED ON AND AFTER NOVEMBER 1, 2017.

4 **1-7-1104. Conduct of elections using approval voting - ballots**  
5 **- information provided to electors.** (1) NOTWITHSTANDING SECTION  
6 1-7-114 (3), ANY ELECTION CONTEST CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL  
7 VOTING MUST ALLOW AN ELECTOR TO VOTE ON A BALLOT FOR AS MANY  
8 CANDIDATES FOR EACH OFFICE AS THE ELECTOR CHOOSES, INCLUDING  
9 WRITE-IN CANDIDATES WHO PROPERLY FILED AFFIDAVITS OF INTENT IN  
10 ACCORDANCE WITH PART 11 OF ARTICLE 4 OF THIS TITLE 1 OR ARTICLE 10  
11 OF TITLE 31, AS APPLICABLE.

12 (2) (a) IN AN ELECTION CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING IN  
13 WHICH ONE CANDIDATE IS TO BE ELECTED TO AN OFFICE, THE DESIGNATED  
14 ELECTION OFFICIAL SHALL DECLARE AS THE WINNER THE CANDIDATE WHO  
15 RECEIVES THE GREATEST NUMBER OF VOTES.

16 (b) IN AN ELECTION CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING IN  
17 WHICH MORE THAN ONE CANDIDATE IS TO BE ELECTED TO AN OFFICE IN A  
18 MULTIPLE-SEAT DISTRICT OR TO A GOVERNING BODY THAT INCLUDES  
19 MULTIPLE AT-LARGE SEATS, THE OFFICES ARE WON BY THOSE CANDIDATES,  
20 IN A NUMBER EQUAL TO THE NUMBER OF SEATS BEING FILLED, WHO  
21 RECEIVE THE GREATEST NUMBER OF VOTES.

22 (3) NOTHING IN THIS SECTION PROHIBITS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
23 FROM IMPOSING OR ENFORCING ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR  
24 DETERMINING THE WINNER OF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION  
25 CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING.

26 **1-7-1105. Secretary of state - rules - guidance to local**  
27 **governments - report - repeal.** (1) PRIOR TO OCTOBER 1, 2017, AND AS

1 NECESSARY THEREAFTER, THE SECRETARY OF STATE SHALL ADOPT RULES  
2 IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 4 OF TITLE 24 ON THE CONDUCT OF  
3 ELECTIONS USING APPROVAL VOTING. THE RULES SHALL PRESCRIBE THE  
4 METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR TABULATING, AUDITING, AND REPORTING  
5 RESULTS IN AN ELECTION USING APPROVAL VOTING.

6 (2) UPON REQUEST, THE SECRETARY OF STATE SHALL PROVIDE  
7 GUIDANCE AND ADVICE TO THE GOVERNING BODIES AND DESIGNATED  
8 ELECTION OFFICIALS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE STATE ON THE  
9 CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS USING APPROVAL VOTING.

10 (3) (a) THE SECRETARY OF STATE SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT  
11 CONCERNING THE USE OF APPROVAL VOTING IN COLORADO TO THE STATE,  
12 VETERANS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEES, OR ANY SUCCESSOR  
13 COMMITTEES, OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NO  
14 LATER THAN FEBRUARY 15, 2020.

15 (b) AT A MINIMUM, THE REPORT SUBMITTED UNDER THIS  
16 SUBSECTION (3) MUST INCLUDE:

17 (I) AN ASSESSMENT OF ALL ELECTIONS CONDUCTED USING  
18 APPROVAL VOTING FROM NOVEMBER 1, 2017, THROUGH NOVEMBER 5,  
19 2019, BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS PART 11 AND  
20 BY HOME RULE CITIES AND CITIES AND COUNTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
21 THEIR CHARTERS;

22 (II) ANY INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE DESIGNATED  
23 ELECTION OFFICIALS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT CONDUCTED AN  
24 ELECTION USING APPROVAL VOTING FROM NOVEMBER 1, 2017, THROUGH  
25 NOVEMBER 5, 2019; AND

26 (III) THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
27 CHANGES TO STATUTES, RULES, AND LOCAL VOTING PROCEDURES THAT

1 WOULD BE REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT APPROVAL VOTING AS A PERMANENT  
2 ALTERNATIVE ELECTION METHOD FOR REGULAR AND SPECIAL FEDERAL,  
3 STATE, AND LOCAL ELECTIONS.

4 (c) THIS SUBSECTION (3) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2020.

5 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 1-10.5-101, **add**  
6 (1)(c) as follows:

7 **1-10.5-101. Recounts required - expenses.**

8 (1) (c) NOTWITHSTANDING SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION, FOR AN  
9 ELECTION CONTEST CONDUCTED USING APPROVAL VOTING, A RECOUNT IS  
10 REQUIRED IF:

11 (I) THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR  
12 ANY CANDIDATE APPARENTLY ELECTED AND THE NUMBER OF VOTES CAST  
13 FOR ANY CANDIDATE APPARENTLY DEFEATED IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO  
14 ONE-HALF PERCENT OF THE NUMBER OF BALLOTS CAST THAT CONTAIN THE  
15 CONTEST, OR LESS THAN SIX IF THE NUMBER OF BALLOTS CAST THAT  
16 CONTAIN THE CONTEST IS ONE THOUSAND OR LESS; OR

17 (II) THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR  
18 ANY CANDIDATE AND A NUMERICAL THRESHOLD THAT TRIGGERS A RUNOFF  
19 ELECTION IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO ONE-HALF PERCENT OF THE TOTAL  
20 BALLOTS CAST THAT CONTAIN THE CONTEST.

21 **SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-31-103, **amend**  
22 (1) as follows:

23 **22-31-103. Board of education to govern conduct of school**  
24 **elections - contract with county clerk and recorder - approval voting**  
25 **authorized - definition.** (1) (a) Except as otherwise provided in this  
26 ~~article~~ ARTICLE 31, the board of education of each school district shall  
27 govern the conduct of all school elections in the district, shall designate

1 an election official who ~~shall be~~ IS responsible for conducting the  
2 election, and shall render all interpretations and make all initial decisions  
3 as to controversies or other matters arising in the conduct of such  
4 elections. All elections authorized in this ~~article~~ ARTICLE 31 shall be  
5 conducted pursuant to ~~the provisions of~~ articles 1 to 13 of title 1. ~~C.R.S.~~

6 (b) A BOARD OF EDUCATION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY USE  
7 APPROVAL VOTING TO CONDUCT A REGULAR BIENNIAL SCHOOL ELECTION  
8 TO ELECT SCHOOL DIRECTORS OF THE DISTRICT IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
9 SECTION 1-7-1103 AND THE RULES ADOPTED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
10 PURSUANT TO SECTION 1-7-1105 (1). AS USED IN THIS SUBSECTION (1),  
11 "APPROVAL VOTING" HAS THE SAME MEANING AS SET FORTH IN SECTION  
12 1-7-1102 (1).

13 **SECTION 7.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 31-10-618 as  
14 follows:

15 **31-10-618. Approval voting authorized - definition.**

16 (1) (a) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY PROVISION OF THIS ARTICLE 10 TO THE  
17 CONTRARY, A MUNICIPALITY MAY USE APPROVAL VOTING TO CONDUCT A  
18 REGULAR ELECTION TO ELECT THE MAYOR OR MEMBERS OF THE  
19 GOVERNING BODY OF THE MUNICIPALITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION  
20 1-7-1103 AND THE RULES ADOPTED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
21 PURSUANT TO SECTION 1-7-1105 (1).

22 (b) NOTWITHSTANDING SECTION 31-10-612, A BALLOT CAST IN AN  
23 ELECTION CONDUCTED UNDER THIS ARTICLE 10 USING APPROVAL VOTING  
24 IS NOT DEFECTIVE SOLELY BECAUSE AN ELECTOR VOTES FOR MORE NAMES  
25 THAN THERE ARE PERSONS TO BE ELECTED TO A PARTICULAR OFFICE.

26 (2) A MUNICIPALITY CONDUCTING AN ELECTION USING APPROVAL  
27 VOTING MAY ADAPT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS ARTICLE 10, INCLUDING



1 REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING THE FORM OF THE BALLOT, THE METHOD OF  
2 MARKING THE BALLOT, THE PROCEDURE FOR COUNTING BALLOTS, AND THE  
3 FORM OF THE ELECTION JUDGES' CERTIFICATE, AS NECESSARY FOR  
4 COMPATIBILITY WITH APPROVAL VOTING.

5 (3) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, "APPROVAL VOTING" HAS THE  
6 MEANING SET FORTH IN SECTION 1-7-1102 (1).

7 **SECTION 8.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add 32-1-805.7** as  
8 follows:

9 **32-1-805.7. Approval voting authorized - definition.**

10 (1) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY PROVISION OF THIS PART 8 TO THE  
11 CONTRARY, A SPECIAL DISTRICT MAY USE APPROVAL VOTING TO CONDUCT  
12 A REGULAR ELECTION TO ELECT DIRECTORS OF THE SPECIAL DISTRICT IN  
13 ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 1-7-1103 AND THE RULES ADOPTED BY THE  
14 SECRETARY OF STATE PURSUANT TO SECTION 1-7-1105 (1).

15 (2) A SPECIAL DISTRICT CONDUCTING AN ELECTION USING  
16 APPROVAL VOTING MAY ADAPT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS PART 8 AND  
17 PART 11 OF ARTICLE 7 OF TITLE 1, INCLUDING REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING  
18 THE FORM OF THE BALLOT, THE METHOD OF MARKING THE BALLOT, THE  
19 PROCEDURE FOR COUNTING BALLOTS, AND THE FORM OF THE ELECTION  
20 JUDGES' CERTIFICATE, AS NECESSARY FOR COMPATIBILITY WITH APPROVAL  
21 VOTING.

22 (3) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, "APPROVAL VOTING" HAS THE  
23 MEANING SET FORTH IN SECTION 1-7-1102 (1).

24 **SECTION 9. Applicability.** This act applies to elections  
25 conducted on or after November 1, 2017.

26 **SECTION 10. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
27 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the

1 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August  
2 9, 2017, if adjournment sine die is on May 10, 2017); except that, if a  
3 referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the  
4 state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act  
5 within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect  
6 unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
7 November 2018 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
8 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.