



September 13, 2016

The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
Office of the Governor  
136 State Capitol Bldg  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

We write on behalf of unaffiliated voters in Colorado who seek full entry into the state's election system. One of us (Ballard) is the founder of the Coalition of Independent Voters in Colorado ("CIVIC"), and the other (Salit) is the President of IndependentVoting.org, a national organization of independent voters.

The Colorado Legislative Council's maneuver to rewrite the Blue Book's information on Initiatives 98 and 140 was shocking and, we believe, contrary to the commitment to level playing fields and freedom of expression which are central to Colorado values.

Since the voter guide offers descriptions of the ballot questions, it is obviously crucial that the descriptions be crafted in a nonpartisan manner. The original language proposed by the Council staff was fair, factual and understandable to voters. The new language gives a highly partisan, biased and misleading description of the measures. Put simply, Initiative 98 allows unaffiliated voters to participate in state and local political party primaries by assuring their receipt of mail ballots, currently guaranteed only to Republicans and Democrats. Initiative 140 establishes presidential primaries that are open to all voters. Both measures would allow the more than *one million unaffiliated voters in Colorado—nearly 38% of the electorate—to fully participate in the democratic process.*

The Legislative Council's changes were, in our opinion, designed to raise doubts among voters by alleging that election outcomes could change as a

result. What an amazing attempt to misinform the voters! If Colorado actually holds elections (unlike what the parties did in the presidential primaries this year) and if all voters are allowed to participate on an equal footing, then the results will be ... the results. The Legislative Council claims that a fair system might produce results that are different. Different from what? Different from the results of elections that don't take place, or from elections which bar 38% of the electorate? Only partisan stakeholders—such as the Legislative Council—would insist that it is better to hold fewer elections with fewer voters!

Interestingly, the Legislature failed to tweak the language for *any other initiatives*, since the vote on rewriting those initiatives ran along party lines. Yet Democratic and Republican lawmakers were able to see “eye to eye” on these two measures, both of which are designed to restore power to the voters—which is where it belongs in a democracy.

Governor Hickenlooper, you are on record as supporting Propositions 98 and 140. We feel, therefore, that it is critical for you to speak out firmly against this attempt by the legislature to distort the public dialogue on these important and simple reforms. If members of the legislature—whatever their party—want to submit an advocacy statement against the *actual* measures, they can and should do so, and be willing to suffer the consequences of repelling a call for voting equality for 38% of the Colorado electorate. But to misuse the authority of their office to deliberately misinform the public is unconscionable.

We look forward to hearing your statement on the above.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Salit  
President, IndependentVoting.org



Gwen Ballard  
Founder, Coalition of Independent Voters in Colorado