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Democracy Will Be"

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Colorado Officials Not Prepared for Anticipated Turnout Early Voting Could Reduce Chance of Election Day Debacle

Takoma Park, MD-October 6, 2008 -- Voters in Colorado could experience Election Day problems because of lack of preparation and uniformity, according to a report released today by nonpartisan election reform and voting rights advocacy group, FairVote.

The report, a compilation of interviews with 44 Colorado county election officials, highlights a lack of uniformity in the way officials are preparing for the expected turnout this November. Only a quarter of those surveyed will prepare a written machine allocation plan that will be available to the public before Election Day. Many officials will rely on "best guesses" when allocating resources to precincts, while others cited past practices and experience to ensure enough machines will be available to avoid long lines.

Voters will use a range of types and brands of voting equipment throughout the state, which could potentially lead to confusion on Election Day. Some local election officials complained of inadequate resources from the state and said they would be utilizing multiple voting technologies to accommodate voters. This lack of uniformity could mean voters in certain parts of the state may have a much easier time getting through the voting process, while others may have to wait much longer to cast their ballot.

The report also shows that Colorado does a relatively good job providing access for most student voters in the state. The largest schools, the University of Colorado at Boulder and Colorado State, both have on-campus polling locations, although smaller colleges in the state generally do not have on-campus voting. Of the 45 colleges in the counties surveyed, only 17 have polling places on campus.

"Colorado's local election officials are doing the best they can with resources available to them," said report co-author Adam Fogel. "The state and federal government need to take elections more seriously by providing adequate funding and guidelines to help local officials. Colorado's early voting law will ultimately encourage more people to vote before Election Day, which could diminish the impact of many of the inadequacies discussed in this report."

FairVote is a nonpartisan electoral reform organization founded on a belief that democracy depends on respect for every voice and every vote. Part of FairVote's Democracy SoS project, *Uniformity in Election Administration: A 2008 Survey of Swing State County Clerks-Colorado Edition* is the third in a series of reports published by FairVote this fall, designed to shed light on practices of county election administrators, as well as their interpretation and compliance with state law. Reports on Missouri and New Mexico were released earlier this fall. A national report is scheduled for release later this month.

Full Report Series: <http://www.fairvote.org/sosresearch>

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