

Clerk Lopez Testifies at Capitol in Support of Multilingual Ballot Bill

Clerk and Recorder Joan Lopez testified virtually in front of the Colorado Legislature on March 11 in support of HB21-1011, a bill that would require counties that meet certain demographic requirements to provide sample ballots in multiple languages, as well as establish a hotline to the Secretary of State's Office for interpretation services.

"This bill will encourage participation among voters for whom English isn't their first language," Lopez testified. "Anyone who has ever read—then reread—a ballot measure knows how complex the language can be. Now imagine this process for someone who didn't learn English as their first language."

Arapahoe County already provides Spanish-language sample ballots at every voter service and polling center (VSPC), as well as a phone line that non-English speakers can use to speak with an interpreter.

The bill would require counties with 2,000 or more adult citizens who do not speak English fluently to provide sample ballots in the languages that are spoken in those counties. The same rule would apply if 2.5 percent of any county's adult population met that criteria.

More details about HB21-1011 can be found [at this link](#).

If passed, the legislation would use data from the 2020 Census to inform which languages would require representation on sample ballots. Counties would be required to have the ballots and hotlines ready for the 2022 General Election.

Lopez acknowledged that the process may seem daunting, but she said it is no more complex than other agreements and contracts county clerks have to evaluate and implement every election cycle.

Moreover, she added, enfranchising voters who may be reluctant—or otherwise unable—to participate in the democratic process is well worth the extra effort.

"Imagine the pride someone will feel, knowing that they can participate in one of the most sacred practices in our country, just like every other Coloradan."

Read Clerk Lopez's full testimony below:

Good morning and thank you.

As Clerk and Recorder, it is my sworn duty to protect and expand ballot box access for Arapahoe County voters.

My Elections Division and I believe House Bill 21-1011 is a common sense tool to ensure that Colorado voters will be able to make informed choices when they vote their ballots. Voters should feel confident when they exercise their right to vote, regardless of their native language. The Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners also supports this bill and together we urge a yes vote.

This bill will encourage participation among voters for whom English isn't their first language.

Anyone who has ever read—then reread—a ballot measure knows how complex the language can be. Now imagine this process for someone who didn't learn English as their first language. Will they understand how they are voting?

That is why Arapahoe County chose to provide Spanish sample ballots for our voters, on our website and at our voting centers for all three elections last year.

I realize those who oppose this legislation may have concerns based on the perceived difficulty in implementation. Getting sample ballots translated is a straightforward process and the cost last year was around \$2,100 in total. Imagine the pride someone will feel, knowing that they can participate in one of the most sacred practices in our country, just like every other Coloradan.

Thank You.