

Good afternoon Chairman Kennedy, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Committee on State, Veterans, and Military Affairs. Thank you for inviting me to your committee and allowing me the opportunity to discuss the ways in which we can work together to protect the right to vote, safeguard our elections, and build a more accessible and transparent democracy for all Coloradans.

I am honored to serve as the Secretary of State. On behalf of the entire Department of State, I want to express our sincere appreciation for your service and our eagerness to work with you to ensure we have the best elections in the country.

I would like to introduce the members of my staff that are here today:

- Jenny Flanagan, Deputy Secretary of State
- Kathryn Mikeworth, Administration Division Director
- Mike Hardin, Business & Licensing Director
- Judd Choate, Elections Director
- Trevor Timmons, Chief Information Officer
- Melissa Polk, Legal and Internal Operations Manager, Elections Division
- Shad Murib, Government & Public Affairs Director
- Serena Woods, Communications Director

I hope you consider us and all of the department of state your partners.

This body has already made great achievements in the advancement of the right to vote. We have made Colorado a national leader in voter turnout and access to the ballot. That every registered voter in Colorado receives a ballot in their mailbox shines in stark contrast to the voter suppression we see across the nation in places like Georgia, Florida, and North Dakota.

The fact that Coloradans can register to vote in person, online, and on Election Day removes barriers to participation that too many of our fellow citizens confront. And Colorado holds the distinction of being one of the safest and most secure states to cast a ballot in the nation. This is in no small part because of the dedicated work of public servants both in this chamber and in the Senate who have courageously stood up for the right to vote. A right that civil rights hero and Congressman John

Lewis has so aptly described, as “precious, and almost sacred, and one of the most important blessings of our democracy.”

Now, I am here today because I believe we can work together to bolster and cement Colorado’s standing as a national leader in elections and democracy. We should be proud of the progress we’ve made, but we can do more to build a democracy that all Coloradans can believe in.

We can find solutions to protect against the negative and misleading advertising paid for by secret special interests; we can give voters more confidence in their elected officials; we can save Coloradans time when they go to vote in person; and we can ensure that foreign countries are not funding campaigns to influence our domestic elections. Together, we can strengthen our state’s laws and become a national leader in ensuring that Colorado's democracy truly belongs to the people.

That’s why I’m excited to work with you in the coming weeks and months to craft and move legislation that will make Colorado an even better place to cast a ballot.

First, let’s make registering to vote in Colorado more accessible than ever by expanding automatic voter registration. Right now, Coloradans benefit from automatic voter registration when they visit driver license offices. This system has increased access to voter registration, but it often leaves out Coloradans with disabilities, low-income Coloradans, the elderly, and those who just aren’t visiting driver license offices. Let’s expand automatic voter registration to other government agencies. We invite you to work with us to increase access to voter registration for eligible citizens wherever possible.

Second, I believe that we can save Coloradans time, and end the era of long lines at our voter service and polling centers on Election Day. By using data, we can give voters the options they need, when they need them, and give our clerks the tools they need to serve their communities faster, more efficiently, and more effectively.

And, third, it is time to put our democracy back in the hands of everyday Coloradans by passing meaningful campaign finance reform. We can’t have our voices drowned out by massive secret political spending. Coloradans deserve to

know who is trying to influence their vote and how they are trying to do it. We must bring transparency to the millions and millions of dollars used to influence our elections.

Now is our time to act to increase disclosure requirements of secret political spending. Now is our time to act to close coordination loopholes. And we must act now to enforce our campaign finance laws.

We are already falling behind. States like Montana and Washington, and even cities like Austin and right here in Denver, have taken action to modernize their campaign finance systems to require greater disclosure. We can ensure we have the strongest democracy in the nation by taking action now.

I do want to be clear on one point: I know this isn't going to be easy. There will be some Democrats and some Republicans who will say they have concerns about more transparency. But I believe that the majority of us here can agree that transparency is good for democracy and we can do more. Campaign finance reform is about making sure that everyone plays by the same set of rules; it's about giving voters the facts.

Along these lines, corporations and special interests should follow the same set of disclosure rules that candidates already do. In Colorado, we do a better job of tracking a \$50 contribution to a candidate than we do tracking a \$50,000 contribution to an independent expenditure committee, which is the Colorado version of a superPAC. We can change this.

And, at a time when foreign actors may be funneling money through nonprofits that then engage in political activity, we must do more to protect the integrity of our elections.

We can also bring transparency to lobbying in order to help bolster the public's confidence in our elected representatives. We can tackle special interest groups' attempts to influence public officials and candidates through contributions to political entities.

These are our priorities. This conversation today is part of a thorough and robust stakeholder process that my office is conducting with community leaders, experts and the public to bring commonsense reform to our elections.

Trust in government is at an all-time low. But we can work together to answer our constituents' call for leadership. Let's take action to build a democracy that all Coloradans can believe in, and pave the way as a leader for the nation.

In the coming days and weeks, I look forward to working with you to turn these ideas into legislation that members of both parties should feel confident turning into law.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to working with you and I am happy to answer any questions.