

Election Law Clinic at Harvard Law School Files Lawsuit on Behalf of Civic Engagement Organizations Challenging the Timing of Off-Cycle Municipal Elections in Colorado Springs.

June 1, 2022

Case: *Citizens Project v. City of Colorado Springs*

COLORADO – Citizens Project, Colorado Latinos Vote, the League of Women Voters of the Pikes Peak Region, and the Black/Latino Leadership Coalition filed suit today challenging the City of Colorado Springs’ decision to hold its elections for City Council and Mayor in April of odd-numbered years. The lawsuit calls for City Council elections to be held in November. The Election Law Clinic at Harvard Law School (ELC) represents Plaintiffs.

The City’s unusual practice of holding non-November elections disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic voters and violates the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Congress enacted Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to eliminate these kinds of practices that result in vote denial on the basis of race.

The City’s abnormal election timing has a drastic negative impact on minority voters. While turnout drops generally in non-November elections, the drop is especially stark for Hispanic and Black voters. In the City’s April elections, non-white turnout is roughly half of white turnout. Whereas in November elections, non-white turnout is roughly 80% of white turnout, reflecting a meaningful and much improved difference.

The practice of holding elections in April ensures that voting in Colorado Springs is not equally open to Hispanic and Black voters in the City. Plaintiffs Citizens Project, Colorado Latinos Vote, the League of Women Voters of the Pikes Peak Region, and the Black/Latino Leadership Coalition bring this lawsuit because they are dedicated to making the democratic process open, accessible, and responsive to all residents in Colorado Springs, including residents of color who have not had equal access.

“Holding elections in April makes the city government less accountable to the urgent needs of our community,” said **Chuck Montoya, Executive Director of Colorado Latinos Vote.**

“The timing of our City elections forces us to turn our time and energy away from the important advocacy work we do during the State Legislative Session, diminishing our ability to serve the community,” said **Michael Williams, Executive Director of Citizens Project.**

“All people should be included in the democratic process; when people of color are kept out of the municipal political process, the City can practically ignore their needs,” said **Shelly Roehrs, Spokesperson of League of Women Voters of the Pikes Peak Region.**

“The discriminatory impact of the April elections has real consequences for our city government. Our communities of color have less of a voice and their quality of life suffers because of elected officials that don’t feel accountable to them,” said **Carolyn Kalaskie, President of the Black/Latino Leadership Coalition.**

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