

November 2025 Northern Colorado Limited Election Observation

Key Observations & Recommendations

ACE conducted Colorado's first limited domestic election observation mission, examining municipal elections in Fort Collins, Boulder, and Longmont (October 20 - November 4, 2025). This limited assessment evaluated electoral rules, campaign regulations, and administrative practices shaping candidate competition in the state's evolving multiparty environment.

Key Findings

Strengths Observed	Structural Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional, transparent election administration across all counties Strong voter turnout (48% Boulder County, record Fort Collins RCV participation) Robust mail-in ballot infrastructure and voter education No credible fraud, intimidation, or malfunctions observed Election staff demonstrated strong operational competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Nonpartisan" label limits formal party involvement, reducing transparency Municipal ordinances restrict candidate coordination and endorsement activities, constraining legitimate campaign communication Uneven public access to election complaints across municipalities Colorado law prevents nonpartisan civil-society organizations from appointing official election observers as poll watchers

Recommendations

To the Colorado General Assembly

- Direct the Secretary of State to establish rules permitting formal nonpartisan election observation by domestic and international organizations, including clear criteria for certifying observer groups and standardized procedures for designating election watchers
- Adopt a resolution inviting the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to observe the 2026 Midterm Election and future statewide elections

To Fort Collins, Boulder, and Longmont

- Fort Collins:** Update municipal election code to ensure consistent regulation of political parties, 501(c)(4) organizations, 527 groups, and other advocacy organizations regarding endorsements and coordinated support. Current restrictions push partisan activity into informal networks, reducing transparency
- Boulder:** Make election-related complaints and their resolution status publicly accessible online to strengthen accountability and align with more accessible models in neighboring municipalities
- Longmont:** Review Fair Campaign Practices ordinance provisions prohibiting candidates from encouraging others to withdraw. Current language may unintentionally restrict good-faith strategic communication and exacerbate vote-splitting in crowded at-large contests