

# Jail-Based Voting in Denver: A Case Study

**Tova Wang**

Director of Research Projects in Democratic Practice, Ash Center for Democracy and Innovation in Governance, Harvard Kennedy School and Christine Tran HKS MPP 2024

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HARVARD Kennedy School

**ASH CENTER**  
for Democratic Governance  
and Innovation

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## About the Author

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- Stuart Clubb, former Ballot Operations Coordinator, Denver Elections Division
- Amber McReynolds, former Director, Denver Elections Division
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## Executive Summary

Denver, Colorado is one of the first jurisdictions in the country to set up in-person polling places in the city's jails for people held in pretrial detention or serving a misdemeanor sentence. This initiative was made possible through the collaboration of the Denver Elections Division, the Denver Sheriff Department, and supportive organizations like Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition and the League of Women Voters of Colorado. Together, they worked to improve voter engagement in the jails, from registering voters and helping them with mail-in ballots to setting up polling places for incarcerated people to cast their ballots in person, just like any other voter in the city. Known as the Confined Voter Program,<sup>1</sup> this initiative allowed the team to iterate and nimbly shift course as they learned about what was most effective and practicable for the program.

The new jail voting system has increased the number of Denver jail residents who can exercise their right to vote and the number who are actually voting. This collaborative network of governmental and nonprofit partners has developed a voting process that balances the needs of voters, elections officials, and corrections staff. Moreover, hopefully, this experience will lead to greater civic participation among eligible voters after they've been released.

The system has worked so well that in 2024, it spurred a landmark piece of state legislation: under Senate Bill 24-72,<sup>2</sup> all county jails and detention centers in Colorado are required to set up polling places to provide in-person voting opportunities.

Key findings from this case study include:

1. **In-person voting is important and has a positive impact on voter engagement and turnout.** The type of balloting system used does not matter; rather, it is the nature of voting in person.
2. **Organizers and advocates can move the needle.** The efforts of organizers and advocates to educate and register voters in jails lays the groundwork for the eventual establishment of in-person polling places.
3. **Strong cross-agency partnerships are key to success.** Strong, trusted relationships among organizers, elections officials, corrections staff, and other government agencies are key. Having leaders who are innovative, thoughtful, and supportive of voting rights for all voters is essential.
4. **Flexible logistics facilitate a smooth process.** Effective in-person voting requires considerable logistical planning, and all the stakeholders should be open to adjusting their approach as they learn how to improve the process.
5. **Legislation is preferable but not necessary.** Legislation can help mandate the enactment of in-person voting in jails (and with greater enforcement power), but successful in-person voting programs can still be achieved without formal legislative mandates.
6. **Same-Day Voter Registration is important.** Same-Day Voter Registration can increase the number of people who participate in the process.
7. **Voter education is an ongoing challenge.** Ensuring that voters in jail have access to information about candidates and ballot measures remains a continuous challenge with legal red tape.

## Introduction

Since 1997, 26 states and the District of Columbia have expanded voting rights to people living with felony convictions or amended policies to guarantee ballot access.<sup>3</sup> Today, 23 states require that people incarcerated for a felony have their voting rights automatically and immediately restored upon their release.<sup>4</sup> At a time of many rollbacks to voting rights, the success of the movement to restore voting rights for those with a felony conviction is extraordinary. At the same time, the voting rights and criminal justice reform community is also focused on ensuring voting rights for the jail-based population, most of whom have not lost their voting rights in the first place. In Colorado, people held in jail pretrial or serving a sentence for a misdemeanor are eligible to vote. Nonetheless, this population faces so many barriers to voting while in jail that, in many places, they are effectively denied the opportunity to vote.

Every eligible citizen should be able to vote, but this group of voters is routinely prevented from doing so. To remedy this, jails and elections departments need to work with organizers, legislators, and other government entities to reform their practices to allow voting from jails.

To demonstrate the number of voters this can affect, in Denver, as of 2022, there were 1,719 people in jail.<sup>5</sup> The most recent disaggregation of the data in 2021 showed that of the 1,427 individuals in jail, 715 people were there to serve their sentences (typically misdemeanor or low-level felony convictions) and 712 people were being held pretrial.<sup>6</sup> Since Denver allows both people detained pretrial or serving a sentence for a misdemeanor to vote, this means that the majority of those being held in Denver jails were eligible voters.<sup>7</sup> In fact, as of February 28, 2024, the Denver Sheriff Department reports that only seven incarcerated individuals were ineligible to vote due to serving a sentence for a felony conviction.<sup>8</sup>

As a burgeoning movement of government leaders, academics, and advocates across the country begins to focus on enfranchising voters in jails, the story of Denver, Colorado, can serve as a model to follow. This report provides a case study on how Denver successfully implemented its Confined Voter Program, which facilitates voting rights in jails. By setting up polling places in the jails to effectively serve as vote centers for in-person voting, along with allowing mail-in voting, incarcerated individuals in Denver can have virtually the same voting experience as any other voter in Denver.

Additionally, this report explores how organizers, the Denver Elections Division, and the Denver Sheriff Department have worked together to address the issue of jail-based disenfranchisement. By sharing the experiences of Denver and the people involved in this effort, we aim to provide guidance for grassroots organizations, elected officials, boards of elections, jail administrators, advocates, and legislators who are seeking to facilitate voting for incarcerated individuals elsewhere.

While this case study focuses on the process of implementing in-person voting in jails within a specific jurisdiction, it has limitations regarding evaluating its broader impact. One area that is worth evaluating further is whether providing more meaningful voting experiences in jails can lead to greater participation after release. Given that these programs are so new, we can only ascertain their impact on later voter turnout based on anecdotal evidence. However, as these initiatives develop and expand, researchers can increase their understanding by engaging with individuals who have experienced incarceration, running surveys, and, availability of data permitting, conducting quantitative analysis.

For a comprehensive overview of the historical context, challenges, and solutions to voting from jail, see our [case study report on Washington, D.C.](#),<sup>9</sup> [synthesis of best practices and recommendations from researchers and advocates](#), and examination of [election laws](#) across all 50 states that either hinder or facilitate jail voting.<sup>10</sup>

This report begins with the events leading up to establishing in-person polling places in the Denver jails. Then, it follows the story behind the development and implementation of in-person jail voting, examining the work that organizers, advocates, and governmental agencies did to get the program in

place. Next, it details key findings by tracing the logistical process that organizers, election administrators, and corrections staff successfully implemented in the jails. The report concludes with suggestions for what people in the field can learn from Colorado going forward.

## Background

The November 2020 presidential election marked the first time people incarcerated in jail in Denver, Colorado, were able to cast their ballots in person.<sup>11</sup> At both the Denver County Jail and Van Cise-Simonet Detention Center, also known as the Denver Detention Center, designated voting areas were set up inside the jails, equipped with electronic poll books, electronic voting tablets, ballot boxes, and more—everything a voter would normally find in a polling place.<sup>12</sup> On November 2 and November 3, voting took place at these locations respectively, with a total of 136 ballots being cast.<sup>13</sup>

At the time, Denver joined only three other municipalities in allowing in-person voting for people detained in jails: Washington, D.C.; Cook County, Illinois; and Los Angeles County, California.<sup>14</sup> This is important because people in jail, held either pretrial or serving a misdemeanor sentence, retain the right to vote. In fact, as long as they remain otherwise eligible, they never lose this right in the first place. This is particularly relevant given that many people in jail are there because they cannot afford their bail.<sup>15</sup>

However, being in jail presents various hurdles at every step—from registering to vote to casting a ballot—hindering individuals’ ability to exercise their right to vote. Known as *de facto* disenfranchisement, this disproportionately impacts low-income Black and Latino individuals who,<sup>16</sup> because of historical and present-day racist policies and practices, are at a greater likelihood of being ensnared in the criminal justice system.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, as this issue draws greater attention, we are learning how people detained in jails are being shut out of the democratic process—and working toward ways to bring them back.

One significant challenge is jailed voters’ lack of awareness about their eligibility to vote.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, navigating the complexities of the election process—such as knowing how to request an absentee ballot (in states that allow for incarcerated individuals to do so),<sup>19</sup> understanding ballot deadlines, and receiving information about candidates and issues—can be extremely cumbersome at best and nearly impossible at worst, especially given the restricted access to information within jails.<sup>20</sup>

Even for those who are aware of their voting rights, logistical challenges persist. The jail mail system can make it extremely difficult to request an absentee ballot, complete it, and return it in time to be counted.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, lack of clarity regarding the status of election materials can lead to them being caught in the mail scanning technology system.<sup>22</sup> Taken together, these barriers can effectively disenfranchise eligible voters in jails.<sup>23</sup>

This provides a short summary of how jail-based disenfranchisement occurs. Additional information can be found in the following reports: Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation’s [“Jail-Based Voting in the District of Columbia: A Case Study,”](#) the Legal Defense Fund’s Thurgood Marshall Institute’s [“Democracy Detained: Fulfilling the Promise of the Right to Vote from Jail,”](#) the Prison Policy Initiative’s [“Eligible, but Excluded: A Guide to Removing the Barriers to Jail Voting,”](#) or the Sentencing Project’s [“Voting in Jails.”](#)



## History

### Laying the Groundwork with Voter Registration Drives in Denver Jails

Since 2004, the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) has been a driving force in advancing voter enfranchisement. Through its [Voting with Conviction campaign](#),<sup>24</sup> CCJRC has undertaken statewide efforts to raise awareness about the voting rights of people with criminal backgrounds. They have provided free training to anyone involved with voting initiatives in the state, conducted voter registration, and done policy advocacy. In addition, the campaign provides “Know Your Rights” information, such as eligibility criteria, how to register to vote, and how to locate voting centers and ballot drop-offs. Their efforts have successfully expanded voting rights in Colorado to include people in jail serving a misdemeanor sentence (2005) and people on parole (2019), among other policy reforms. They have disseminated their work to the public, election officials, candidates, organizers of voter registration drives, and nonprofits.<sup>25</sup> CCJRC also produces a [“Colorado Voting Guide”](#) with civic engagement resources tailored to people with criminal histories to encourage them to vote, explaining the importance of voting, how to find information on candidates, the different types of elections, and the roles of elected officials.<sup>26</sup>

CCJRC’s continued education and awareness campaign has proven crucial over the years, as a significant number of Colorado voters were misinformed about or misunderstood the voting rights and eligibility of individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

According to a 2018 survey of 600 Colorado voters conducted by CCJRC:<sup>27</sup>

- Only 57% of respondents knew that individuals who have finished their sentence are eligible to vote again.
- 43%, or less than half of respondents, knew that individuals on probation (felony or misdemeanor) are eligible to vote.
- 43% of respondents did not know that people in jail for misdemeanors are eligible voters.
- 59% of respondents did not know that people in pretrial detention are eligible voters.

A decade later, CCJRC went a step further, running the first voter registration drives at Denver County Jail (DCJ) and Denver Detention Center (DDC) for the upcoming 2016 presidential election.<sup>28</sup> CCJRC met with and proposed the idea to the Denver Elections Division (DED) and the Sheriff Department.<sup>29</sup> The program would focus on educating eligible voters in jail about their voting rights as well as registering people to vote.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Colorado’s expansive vote-by-mail system, which, along with only seven other states,<sup>31</sup> has allowed all elections to be conducted by mail since 2013<sup>32</sup>—meaning that all eligible voters receive their ballot in the mail—this system still poses significant limitations for voters that are in jail around election days.

Credit goes to then-CCJRC Deputy Director Juston Cooper, then-Civic Engagement Coordinator Jasmine Ross, 2015 DED Director Amber McReynolds, and DED Ballot Operations Coordinator Stuart Clubb for driving Denver’s voter registration and in-person jail voting program forward during its early stages. CCJRC pitched the idea to the DED team.<sup>33</sup> Notably, as soon as the idea of improving jail-based voting surfaced, the government took action. While Denver is similar to other jurisdictions in the role that external advocates played in pushing for the implementation of in-person jail-based voting, it stands out because it did not require an aggressive, external multi-year campaign. The DED’s proactive response sets Denver apart from other places, where substantial external pressure was necessary for similar progress.

In Stuart Clubb's interview, he remarked that first and foremost, people in jail needed to be made aware of upcoming elections and their eligibility to vote. Even with this knowledge, taking the initial steps toward jail voting proved arduous. Incarcerated individuals either relied on family members to deliver their mail-in ballots or hoped for timely delivery through the jail mailing system. However, many people did not receive their ballots because the mailing address was sourced from their voter registration form, which became outdated upon their incarceration. People frequently fail to update their address to their current location in jail because they did not have the opportunity to do so prior to their incarceration or did not think to update it later. Those who sought assistance from jail staff to receive their mail-in ballots encountered additional challenges, with some staff members mistakenly believing that people incarcerated in jails are ineligible to vote or lacking the knowledge to facilitate the voting process on their behalf.<sup>34</sup>

Under the Confined Voter Program, the first registration drives started three months prior to the 2016 presidential elections. CCJRC and Stuart Clubb visited DCJ and DDC once a month to educate people in jails about their eligibility. They assisted in registering individuals to vote or verifying their existing voter registration status to mitigate errors that could lead to their ballots being rejected. They also provided information on how to receive their ballot and what was on it.<sup>35</sup> At the time, they were not allowed to bring in any technological devices that connected to the internet.<sup>36</sup> However, they produced a voting video to play in the jails that provided information on voter eligibility rules, instructions to complete voter registration forms, penalties for those who vote but are not eligible voters, why voting is important, and an overview of the different types of elections. The videos were made available in English and Spanish.<sup>37</sup>

Andrew Jones, the program manager for the Denver Sheriff Department, oversaw the jail voting program on the sheriff's side. According to Jones, before 2016, one person would make the rounds, try to determine eligibility, and assist those interested in voting by mail. Starting in 2016, this expanded to include volunteers assisting incarcerated people as well as additional education and voter registration opportunities. All eligible voters who registered in jail received mail ballots. Then, the jail staff collaborated with the mail service to track who received ballots, ensuring that all registered voters were kept informed of the need to submit their ballots on time, using the "kite box" the jail kept for the ballots.<sup>38</sup> That year, according to CCJRC, they registered over 300 people in the jails as voters.<sup>39</sup>

From 2018 to 2020, the DED worked with CCJRC and the League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWV) to implement a more systematic approach for registering people in jail to vote. Shelby Miller, a voter services administrator with the DED, described the process as follows: One person from the DED would lead the registration drive in collaboration with CCJRC and LWV. The small team would visit each pod within the jails to provide information about voting, work one-on-one to register individuals, and answer any questions that arose. They would then process the registrations and deliver the ballots to the jail PO Box.<sup>40</sup> In 2018 and 2019, CCJRC registered about 824 people as voters.<sup>41</sup>

Since 2020, the Confined Voting Program has expanded in size and scope. In addition to ongoing voter registration efforts, the DED has focused on documenting their procedures and tracking data to evaluate the outcomes of the registration drives, including how many individuals who registered actually voted.<sup>42</sup> Further details about this will be provided in the Findings section.

### **Paving the Way for In-Person Voting in Denver Jails**

As previously mentioned, just four years after voter registration drives began at DCJ and DDC, both jails held inaugural in-person voting events for the 2020 presidential election. These were made possible through the collaboration of CCJRC, LWV, DED, and the Denver Sheriff Department.<sup>43</sup>

CCJRC spearheaded the push for in-person voting from the outside, motivated by their belief that it would increase voter turnout by bringing in those who were not reached through voter registration drives or mailed ballots.<sup>44</sup> The staff at the DED, including Amber McReynolds, the Denver clerk at the time, had already been exploring the possibilities of in-person voting in jails. They proceeded with the initiative, viewing it as a fundamental part of their job to ensure voting accessibility for every resident of Denver.<sup>45</sup> A team at the DED, led by the extraordinary election administrator Maysa Sitar, now the voting accessibility administrator, was involved in implementing the logistics and education efforts described below.

As with all voters in Denver, eligible voters who were incarcerated were sent a mail ballot. Using the jail as their mailing address, they could choose to cast their vote by mail. By 2020, thanks to the Confined Voter Program, they had the option to vote in person at a polling place, with poll workers, DED officials, and voting machines.

### DED Logistics in 2020

At the jails' inaugural in-person voting events in 2020, held on November 2 at the DCJ and November 3 at the DDC,<sup>46</sup> a dedicated room was set up on each floor of the facilities, one at a time. On each floor, jail staff brought in five individuals at a time. First, DED staff used an electronic poll book to determine eligibility.<sup>47</sup> Next, voters marked their votes on a ballot marking device on an electronic tablet, and then the ballot was printed out. The polling places had two such machines. The voters then placed their printed ballots in the ballot box. Finally, the staff packed up all the equipment and reassembled it on the next floor. In 2020, 136 voters who were incarcerated voted in person.<sup>48</sup>

Two deputies were assigned to the polling place, and Jones was careful about whom he chose. They needed to be patient, answer questions, and be respectful. Jones recognized that incarcerated people would need to learn how the election process worked, so staff made the rounds in the days leading up to the election, asking if anyone had questions and confirming that they had received their mail ballots.

The system was a success; however, there were some challenges. In particular, many interviewees recalled that setting up and taking down the polling stations on five different floors led to a 16-hour workday for DED and jail staff. Additionally, the ballot was quite long (as is typical in Colorado), and voters needed time to make their choices. However, voting on the two machines limited the amount of time each voter had to review the ballot.

From Andrew Jones' perspective, the first year of in-person voting in 2020 was a lot of work but went fairly smoothly. Having year-round voter education in the jail helped with individuals in jail during the voting period, as well as those who would be moved or released.

### DED Logistics in 2023–2024

In 2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person voting at the jails did not take place.<sup>49</sup> However, the project restarted in 2023, when in-person voting occurred three times at the jails: once for the April municipal election, which involved the election of the Denver mayor and city council members as well as voting on ordinances; again in June for the municipal runoff election to determine the new mayor and certain city councilmembers; and lastly in November, for the statewide coordinated election, which included ballot measures, school board members, and local government positions.<sup>50</sup>

For the 2023 municipal elections, there was a difference this time. DED was focused on finding an in-person voting model that met the following criteria:

- Time efficiency
- Safety for both election judges and voters
- Strong security measures
- Accessibility for all voters

To accomplish their goal, the DED capitalized on the opportunity presented by having two municipal elections in 2023 that shared several common traits. Both elections occurred around the same time of the year (in April and June), featured only local candidates, and had similar voter turnouts (36% and 38% respectively). These similarities allowed the DED to experiment with two different in-person voting models while minimizing other varying factors as much as possible.<sup>51</sup>

In the first local election in April 2023, the DED implemented Model 1 for in-person voting, using the ImageCast X (ICX) tablet. With this method, voters mark their ballots electronically on the tablet. Once they finish making their selections, the system prints the ballot, which the voters then place into a ballot box.<sup>52</sup>

For the second local election in June 2023, the DED adopted Model 2 for in-person voting. In this model, voters still came to the polling place, but instead of voting on a tablet, the election judge printed and handed them a mail-style ballot corresponding to their jurisdiction. Voters had the option to fill out their ballot on-site and submit it immediately, or they could take it back to their pods to complete and return later. A comparison of the two models is provided below.<sup>53</sup>

### Comparison of In-Person Voting Models for Denver’s 2023 Elections

Feature	Model 1: April 4, 2023	Model 2: June 6, 2023
Voting Method	ICX Tablets	Printed mail ballots
Voting Time Frame	Must vote on the spot	Can vote on the spot Can take the ballot to their pods to submit later
Ballot Handling	Voters marked their ballot on the ICX tablets, which were then printed	Election judges printed mail ballots and handed them to voters, who then marked the ballots

In both models, the process of identifying and verifying voters within the jails was the same:<sup>54</sup>

1. The Sheriff Department provides the DED with a list of all the individuals incarcerated in the jails during the voting period.
2. During the voting event, the election judge checks each individual voter’s ID. Since many voters will not have identification, they can use a “Verification of Residency” form signed by the sheriff as their identification.
3. Because the jail houses people who are under the jurisdiction of the Colorado Department of Corrections and are therefore ineligible to vote, the election judge verifies their felony status on the registration and Department of Corrections database.
4. The election judge checks each verified voter’s registration record in the SCORE, Colorado’s voter registration database.
5. If applicable, the election judge registers new voters through same-day registration or updates their registration if needed.

A discussion about which model worked best for jail-based voting is below. Under both models, the voter turnout in jails due to in-person voting events was remarkable. Data for the 2023 municipal elections by the DED showed that:<sup>55</sup>

- In the April municipal election, the voter turnout rate at DCJ and DDC was 79.4%,<sup>56</sup> significantly higher than the 38.8% turnout among registered voters in Denver’s general population.<sup>57</sup>
- In the June municipal runoff election, the voter turnout rate at DCJ and DDC was 58.7%.<sup>58</sup> In comparison, the turnout of the general population stood at 36.8%.<sup>59</sup>

The data, while nascent, points to the success of jail-based voting and aligns with what practitioners and advocates on the ground have long understood: people in jails face significant hurdles in exercising their right to vote due to a lack of awareness about their eligibility and nearly insurmountable logistical challenges. At the same time, it also underscores that with targeted outreach, continued engagement efforts, and trusted individuals to facilitate the voting process, people in jail express a desire to vote—and, most importantly, a willingness to do so.

In the April election, 41 out of a total of 60 voters (about 68%) at DCJ and DDC were either newly registered voters or had their voter records updated to enable them to vote. In the June election, 56 out of a total of 75 voters (about 75%) at DCJ and DDC were either newly registered voters or had their voter records updated to enable them to vote.

By the next election in 2023, the November coordinated election, the DED had decided to use Model 2 for this and subsequent elections,<sup>60</sup> issuing mail ballots in person as its default jail-based voting model. The November election yielded a voter turnout rate of 43% for the DCJ and DDC together, compared to 36.5% for the general population.<sup>61</sup> Between both jails, 159 out of 187, or about 85%, of all eligible jail voters who came to vote in person cast a ballot in 2023.<sup>62</sup>

Most recently, Denver hosted its fifth jail-based voting event, the 2024 presidential primary election. People in DDC cast their ballots on February 28, 2024, followed by those in DCJ on February 29, 2024.<sup>63</sup> Once again, turnout data provided by the DED confirmed the importance of providing in-person voting opportunities for those who are incarcerated.

Across both events, a total of 106 voters attended the in-person voting event and were issued a mail ballot. Of those voters, 101 returned their ballot (about 95%). Ninety-eight ballots were cast the same day that they were issued (likely because there was only one question on the ballot) and, ultimately, 94 ballots were accepted (seven ballots were rejected).<sup>64</sup> Outside of the in-person voting events, 30 of the 56 voters (about 54%) who received their ballots by mail from the jails returned their ballots.<sup>65</sup>

Unlike in Washington, D.C., the DED and the jail do not use people who are incarcerated as poll workers, or as they are called in Denver, “election judges.” In fact, the DED is very careful about who they assign to the jails. Sitar told us that she very intentionally picks election judges she knows are experienced and will treat jail voters with respect.

### Finding the Best Model for In-Person Voting

After experimenting with two different voting models for the April and June 2023 elections, the DED, jail staff, and organizers decided to transition from using ICX tablets to issuing on-demand mail ballots for voters. There were several convincing reasons for doing so, and everyone interviewed believes it was the right choice.

The biggest reason is logistical: issuing mail ballots on-demand is much quicker. With the ICX tablets (Model 1), the number of voters is limited by the number of tablets available, causing a line where others must wait for a tablet to become available. This results in longer wait times compared to printing and issuing mail ballots, where voters can mark their ballots independently without waiting for a tablet.<sup>66</sup>

Given the small size of rooms in the jail and the need to bring in voters in small groups one floor at a time, the voting process was quite time-consuming. Furthermore, the additional equipment and longer setup and takedown time required additional hours. Add to that the length of Colorado ballots and the time it takes each voter to mark their ballots on the tablets—doing it this way was beyond the time and resources available to the DED and the jails. The jails did not have the space to bring in more machines; there just weren’t enough hours in the day under these conditions.

In comparison, printing and issuing mail ballots (Model 2) was easier to set up and take down and required less equipment. Additionally, election judges did not have to wait for voters to finish marking

their ballots before serving the next voter.<sup>67</sup> What's more, the DED sees it as an advantage that voters can take the ballot with them and not vote on the spot if they so choose; this allows them to study it as well as take it with them if they are moved or released before early voting begins.

There is a major additional advantage to in-person, jail-based voting regardless of the model: because Colorado has same-day registration (SDR), eligible voters can register to vote and cast their ballot at the same time, up to Election Day.<sup>68</sup> As such, for voters who miss the deadlines to register or update their voter registration status in order to receive their mail ballots (usually eight days before Election Day),<sup>69</sup> eligible voters at DCJ and DDC can take advantage of SDR to register to vote for the first time or update their voter registration, then cast their vote immediately after. SDR can only happen in-person; voting by mail does not allow for the possibility.<sup>70</sup>

The DED and the jails believe that printing and issuing mail ballots is just as meaningful as voting on a ballot-marking device, such as an ICX tablet. The voting process remains an in-person event, with face-to-face interactions: election judges verify voters' eligibility, help them fill out or update their registration forms as needed, answer questions, and physically hand them the ballots.<sup>71</sup> This aspect of personal, face-to-face interaction—with election judges (poll workers) and government officials like the DED and jail staff who welcomed and guided the voters—made the difference. Even though the model has shifted from tablets to printed mail ballots, the conversations at the polling place with DED staff and volunteers are the same as they were with the tablets.

Amber McReynolds emphasized the critical nature of the in-person voting experience. Many of the individuals in jail are first-time voters, and in-person voting ensures there are trained people there to help them with the voting process, from registering to vote to submitting their ballots. Moreover, she said, voting in person gave people who are incarcerated a sense of hope in recovering and rejoining society. This might be the only invitation they get to participate in the decision-making of the outside world. Many of them have very negative views of the government, but in this case, the government is helping them have a voice. This is likely a very different experience with government than they've had in the past.<sup>72</sup>

There are three major downsides to issuing mail ballots rather than using tablets: 1) some voters may take the ballot with them and never return it; 2) some voters will be sentenced for a felony between when they receive their ballot and when they return it, thereby making them ineligible to vote; and 3) there is the greater possibility for ballots to be rejected because of signature discrepancy.

When voting with the ICX tablet for the April election, there was by definition 100% turnout and all ballots were accepted on the spot.<sup>73</sup> However, issuing mail ballots, as was the case in June, led to 14 unreturned ballots and three rejected ballots (which were later cured before the deadline).<sup>74</sup> The DED noted that curing ballots that are rejected because of a forgotten or discrepant signature is more difficult for voters who are incarcerated because curing ballots usually happens via email or text (both of which cannot be accessed by voters in jails) and requires some form of identification (which may be difficult for voters in jails to procure). However, the DED also noted that they can work with the Denver Sheriff Department (DSD) to help voters cure their ballots.<sup>75</sup> The DED has not yet encountered a case where an eligible voter who received a ballot at an in-person event became ineligible before returning their ballot because they received a felony sentence, though they note that it remains a possibility.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the concerns, everyone believes that Model 2 proved to be more efficient, given that it required fewer election judges and less equipment while allowing election judges to serve more voters in less time. This is a necessary change with a minimal impact on the experience or the turnout. The data above bears this out, as turnout for both the April and June elections was higher for incarcerated voters than the general public.



Since all active voters are entitled to receive a mail ballot, individuals who are incarcerated are still free to choose to vote by mail. Their ballot is deposited in a “kite box,” maintained by the jail, not the U.S. Postal Service, ensuring that it is submitted by the deadline.

Another big advantage of both Model 1 and Model 2 is that people who are incarcerated are not reliant on family or jail staff to handle their ballots. Rather, they are being met in a secure location by a bipartisan team of election judges. That provides a higher level of integrity and security than entrusting ballots to other people.

## **Logistical Issues across All Elections**

There were certain challenges that the DED had to address for all the elections they conducted in the jails.

### **Preparing and Training Staff and Volunteers**

According to CCJRC, everyone that is working on the voting events and handling the equipment must go through a security clearance. As such, the Confined Voter Program (CVP) implementers must factor in the time that it takes to receive clearance when planning for their next voter registration drive or in-person voting event. Additionally, while everyone must complete annual background checks, having a criminal record does not automatically disqualify someone from CCJRC or LWV from participating in the CVP.

Outside of security clearances, the DED notes that they conduct specific training for their team entering the jails to ensure they are aware of the unique needs of conducting in-person voting in such settings.

### **Navigating Security Protocols and Restrictions within Jail Facilities**

Sitar remarked that in-person voting efforts may take longer than voter registration drives. This is because the team can go pod-to-pod during voter registration drives. However, for in-person voting, many of the pods cannot be mixed together, so corrections staff must escort each pod individually to the voting room. Additionally, if the voting room is in a different building or on a different floor, and a particular pod cannot move between buildings or floors, the equipment must be easily transportable and simple to set up and take down.

### **Verifying Eligibility and Curing Ballots**

Verifying eligible voters within the jails can be difficult. There are various requirements to confirm voter status, and people who are incarcerated may not have access to identification documents. The DED utilizes a jail ID that relies on Colorado law, allowing the jail to sign a document verifying that a voter resides there. A voter does not need to provide ID to receive a mail ballot unless they are a first-time voter. Staff at the DED have developed and streamlined the eligibility verification process by leveraging the state’s SCORE system and the Colorado Department of Corrections’ list of people in the jail to distinguish between people in jail who are eligible or ineligible to vote.

Additionally, curing ballots while in jail may be difficult. However, the DED team has developed a procedure to ensure ballots with discrepancies can be resolved. Voters are mailed their cure letter, as required by law. Additionally, since mail is likely to be delayed, the DED emails the cure forms to the jail administrator for distribution to voters in jail. The jail administrator then assists the voter in emailing their completed cure form and ID (which the jail administrator can provide) back to the DED, resulting in much faster curing. Outside jail, Colorado voters can cure by mail, email, text, fax, or in person. Without these additional steps, only mail would be an option for confined voters.

### Developing Methods to Collect Data and Track Outcomes

Given the recency of voter initiatives in jails, including voter registration drives and in-person jail polling places, quantitative data on these programs' successes and outcomes are still being developed. However, the CVP team is now actively working to document their methods to answer questions that will improve planning and management in the future. For instance: What are the best days for these initiatives? How many days prior to an election should planning start?

Furthermore, the team recognized the need for better data tracking to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. Now, they are focused on collecting specific data, such as the sample size of registered voters. Additionally, they're looking at how many people actually vote compared to those who use same-day registrations among those who register during the drives, in person, or with the jail as a mailing address.

### Partnership between CCJRC, Jails, the DED, and Other Government Agencies

The existence of voter registration drives and polling places in jails required collaboration, strategic planning, and consensus among advocates experienced in working with populations who are or have been incarcerated, election officials responsible for administering elections, and the Sheriff Department, which facilitates access to these populations.

Interviews highlight the critical importance of people in positions of influence supporting the implementation of these initiatives. Amber McReynolds, the DED director at the time, built the necessary relationships from the beginning, engaging with the police chief, sheriff, and mayor, among others.

Todd Davidson, the current director of the DED, highlighted the evolution of Denver's voter registration efforts, noting that, previously, while "outreach was there, [it was] not nearly as well organized as the current team."<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Anne Duncan of the LWV Denver said that the key is receiving support from the sheriff: "They [DED staff Stuart Clubb and Justin Cooper] talked to the sheriff in 2018, who was agreeable. The sheriff who came in 2020 was enthusiastically for it. He told the jails, 'We're doing this.'"<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the year, the DED, CCJRC, DSD, and LWV have monthly meetings about the Confined Voter Program. In anticipation of jail voting, Sitar also meets regularly with the jail program staff to coordinate, preparing the rooms for jail voting, ensuring proper staffing, conducting background checks for election judges and DED staff entering the jails, and so on.

Jasmine Ross and Kyle Giddings from CCJRC described their strong relationships with the DED, the Sheriff Department, and LWV. These help the voter initiatives run smoothly in the jails. They also highlighted the presence of a designated administrator with the jails, serving as a central point of contact among CCJRC, LWV, and the DED.

Both the DED and the jail staff made it very clear that this could not have happened—and could not happen now—without CCJRC. Andrew Jones underscored that many individuals in jail already have relationships with DED staff and CCJRC, since the organization works with them all year. That familiarity and trust makes them more likely to participate in the voting process.<sup>79</sup> Jones also felt that the enthusiasm of jail staff, DED staff, and CCJRC volunteers made the experience more enjoyable for voters who are incarcerated, which he believes positively impacts propensity to vote on the outside.

As in Washington, D.C., jail leadership understood that voting is an integral part of successful reentry. Jones explained to us that the Sheriff Department's top priority is providing transition services for individuals who are reentering.<sup>80</sup> The focus is preparing them for life after release, including participating in the voting process.



## Voter Education

Providing mail-in paper ballots that people can take back with them to study before voting raises a question: do incarcerated individuals have the resources and access to information to do that and actually submit their ballot? There have been some challenges to voter education, though all interviewees felt that people who are incarcerated did have sources of information. The DED and CCJRC have implemented the Mile High Civic Engagement Program, which informs people how to register and vote. Through the program, they also provide nonpartisan information about how the government works and how one can get involved beyond just voting. Detainees have access to television, and jail staff told us they watch the news and talk amongst themselves about it.<sup>81</sup>

CCJRC oversees a great deal of the voter education, though for the mayoral election, they ran up against decisions by the city attorneys denying some of their materials as too partisan or going too far into advocacy.<sup>82</sup> However, according to CCJRC, the materials simply presented the candidates' own stated positions. CCJRC sent out a survey to candidates, who answered the questions, but this literature was rejected by the city attorneys. For the school board election, however, a booklet containing statements from the candidates was approved. Seemingly arbitrary decisions like this make providing candidate information as part of voter education a persistent challenge.

In March 2023, CCJRC conducted a survey among people inside DCJ and DDC to learn more about the voting landscape in the jails. The survey aimed to understand people's opinions about voting, their voting history, and barriers they face when trying to vote in jail. Many of the responses underscored the ongoing challenges in accessing information.<sup>83</sup>

- **Importance of voting:** 78% of respondents said that voting is "very important."
- **Voting frequency:** 61% of respondents voted in either every election (22%) or some elections (39%).
- **Barriers to voting in jail:** The top three reasons cited for not voting in jail were:
  1. "Being in jail made it too difficult."
  2. "I didn't know enough about the issues I would be voting on"
  3. "I didn't know enough about the candidates."
- **Sources of voter registration:** Over 60% of registered voters were registered by community partners, including CCJRC and League of Women Voters. The DED registered over 30% of voters.
- **Lack of exposure to voter education materials:** A majority of respondents reported that they did not see the voter education materials that CCJRC gave to the Sheriff Department, including a voter education video, voter eligibility palm card, voter registration form, and voter information poster.
- **Information needs:** Respondents expressed interest in learning more about several topics, including:
  - Different types of elections.
  - The major political parties.
  - Voter eligibility for people with criminal backgrounds.

These findings highlight that within DCJ and DDC, there are engaged populations of eligible voters who want to exercise their right to vote. However, despite the phenomenal work of the DED, CCJRC, and LWV, there is more to be done to support individuals who wish to vote from jail. This includes improving access to voter education.

CCJRC recommends several measures to improve voter participation among incarcerated individuals and bolster their voter education. These include providing voter registration forms as soon as people are admitted into the jails, making voter information guides on candidates and issues readily available during all elections, increasing the number of voter registration drives, offering classes on civic education, and providing community partners with a list of eligible voters to better target

outreach.<sup>84</sup> However, the jails have become stricter about what materials can be brought in, and the standards for review by city attorneys have been unclear.<sup>85</sup> They have been able to show a recording of candidate forum so that people could know who was running.

According to interviewees, the jail does make recordings of candidate debates available, but they are not consistent; it depends on the deputy in charge. Sitar told us the DED provided debate footage for local elections, explaining, “because debates are played on public TV channels that confined voters can tune into at any time, we were permitted to provide the recorded debate footage.” However, she also noted, “Though we provide these DVDs, people in each pod can change the TV channels at any time, so we heard from many voters that they had not had the chance to see the footage. Many voters expressed an interest in learning more, as well as a concern that they didn’t know much about the candidates. We told them to ask the deputies to play the footage for them, and many voters took their ballots with them so that they could watch the footage before voting.”<sup>86</sup>

## Heading Toward Legislation to Implement In-Person Jail Voting Statewide

In 2018, the Colorado secretary of state adopted election rules requiring county clerks to make an effort to coordinate with their sheriff departments to support voting in jails. These rules were codified into law in 2021.<sup>87</sup> They included helping people in jail register to vote and requiring clerks to submit election plans outlining their strategies to provide voting information, facilitate voter registration, and deliver and collect mailed ballots from people in jails.<sup>88</sup> At the time, these requirements went far beyond what other states were doing.

However, a 2020 study by Common Cause demonstrated that while the rules led to progress, they were insufficient. Colorado Common Cause, a nonprofit focused on government accountability, reviewed the quality of election plans submitted by 57 Colorado counties with jails to assess compliance with these rules. They evaluated the plans based on nine standards, which included whether the county clerks collaborated with the sheriffs, if there were plans in place to ensure all ballots were delivered to and collected from people in jails, and whether the plans included provisions to work with incarcerated people and provide accessible voter information.<sup>89</sup>

Of the 57 counties reviewed, only seven counties received an “exemplary” rating, meaning they met all nine standards. In total, 29 of them, or just over 50%, received either an “exemplary” or “good” rating, a promising sign given that the review was conducted in the first year of the rule’s implementation.<sup>90</sup> The second part of Colorado Common Cause’s survey focused on evaluating county clerks’ and sheriffs’ efforts in helping eligible voters who are incarcerated register and vote, along with examining the collaboration between the two entities.<sup>91</sup> Colorado Common Cause found that while many clerks and sheriffs self-reported that facilitating jail-based registration and voting was a priority, their answers often did not translate to more time and resources devoted to *actually* securing the right to vote for people in jails. In many instances, despite ranking jail-based ballot access as a high priority, clerks and sheriffs revealed later in the survey that they spent less than an hour coordinating this work, did not implement voter registration programming, and/or did not conduct outreach to eligible voters for upcoming elections.<sup>92</sup>

Interestingly, a significant number of clerks and sheriffs reported that there were no barriers to jail-based voting, a particularly worrisome finding as it suggests a disconnect between their perceptions and the challenges that practitioners and researchers have identified.

Over the last few years, continued and persistent advocacy and organizing efforts, and the support of many election administrators, has convinced the legislature to go farther. Senate Bill 24-72 was signed into law on May 31, 2024, and is a truly groundbreaking piece of legislation. The headline is that it requires every county jail in Colorado to establish a temporary polling place for in-person voting that operates for at least one day and is open for at least six hours during every general election.

As described in the bill summary:<sup>93</sup>

- A county sheriff must designate at least one individual to facilitate voting in the jail and the sheriff's designee must coordinate with the county clerk and recorder.
- The jail is responsible for determining the felony status and eligibility of the detainees.
- For mail ballot elections, the sheriff's designee is required to set up a central location at the jail to return a mail ballot, functioning as a drop box. The ballots collected in this location cannot be sent through regular mail.
- The designee must provide all the necessary information for a detainee to vote by mail successfully.
- By no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on Election Day, a team of bipartisan election judges must conduct a final collection of ballots from this central location.
- The jail staff must establish a way for detainees to "cure" a ballot if it is defective for any reason, ensuring the vote can be counted.
- The secretary of state must create training materials for clerks to use in training the sheriff's designee.

In an attempt to address the problem of providing adequate candidate and issue information to detainees, the bill also says the sheriff's designee must "ensure that all confined eligible electors have reasonable access to the ballot information booklet, the information required by section I-40-125 C.R.S and any election-related materials that are prepared and provided to the designee in support of or in opposition to any candidate or issue on the ballot."

If the sheriff or the sheriff's designee does not comply with the requirements, they are "subject to assessment of a civil penalty determined by the court and payable by the county in the amount of \$5,000 per violation."

## Findings

From this analysis of the process for having in-person voting in the jails, how it was implemented and refined along the way, and the turnout data, we can discern some lessons that may inform other jurisdictions. They are as follows.

**Finding 1. In-person voting in jail is important and has a positive impact on voter engagement and turnout. The type of balloting system used does not matter; rather, it is the nature of voting in person. Jurisdictions should assess which system best suits their election needs.**

From our interviews with stakeholders involved in facilitating the voting process for eligible voters in jails, and our review of voter turnout data from the two jails, it seems clear that holding in-person voting events at the jails invigorates incarcerated people and encourages them to participate in the democratic process. Additionally, some of our interviewees believe that jail-based voting has positive impacts beyond enfranchising incarcerated voters; they believe it can also increase the likelihood that these individuals will continue to be active voters after being released from pretrial detention or upon completing their sentences.

Testimonials from voters in jail, as reported in the media, echo the sentiments shared by Confined Voter Program partners. In 2020, the first year of the in-person voting program, inmate Angel Rodriguez expressed, “I’m very happy that as an inmate, I have the opportunity to vote, you know, that I have a say.”<sup>94</sup>

During the June municipal election in 2023, Gregory Sharpe at DDC said, “I wanted my vote to make a difference. Wanted my vote to be cast just to make sure everybody knows that no matter what, your vote counts. If you’re in jail and you’re eligible, do it. If you’re on the streets and you’re eligible, do it. Just fill it out.”<sup>95</sup>

Isaiah Rodriguez at DDC even noted that there can be a domino effect of encouraging those who are incarcerated to vote: “I have an uncle that’s in jail. He encouraged me [to vote], and then I inspired other people . . . Other people inspired other people.”<sup>96</sup>

Offering in-person voting in any form is the critical factor here. While having a machine voting *option* is preferable, the system Denver is using—holding in-person voting events on Election Day, where eligible voters receive printed mail ballots—could be a more achievable method for some jurisdictions, particularly those with lengthy ballots.

However, for voters who opt to take ballots with them for further study instead of submitting them immediately at the polling place, it is critical that they receive sufficient information and education about the election to make informed decisions, including information about the candidates and any propositions. Senate Bill 24-72 is expected to address this by clarifying the types of information to provide to voters.

**Finding 2. Organizers and advocates can move the needle. The effort of organizers and advocates to educate and register voters in jails lays the groundwork for eventual in-person polling places.**

As we found in our Washington, D.C., study, organizers and advocates had to lay the groundwork before in-person voting took off. When CCJRC first made contact with the jails in 2016 to run voter education and registration drives, it was the culmination of discussions between the organization, the DED, and the Sheriff Department.<sup>97</sup> Director Todd Davidson recalls the origin of these efforts: “Nascency goes back to 2015, [when Denver Director of Elections] Amber [McReynolds] and [Colorado Director of Elections] Judd [Choate] really started the conversation. Just a small crew. Stuart Clubb would go over, [spend a] number of days in facilities, along with someone usually from CCJRC.”<sup>98</sup>

Denver’s establishment of jail-based voting started with voter registration drives. Moreover, initiation of these efforts happened without legislative action. Instead, the process began in dialogue among stakeholders at the intersection of voting rights (CCJRC and LWV), election administration (the DED), and the criminal justice system (the Denver Sheriff Department).

Community-based organizations and advocates can begin paving the way for jail-based voting by implementing programs that focus on voter education and registration before progressing to in-person voting initiatives. The advantage of this approach is that, as Jasmine Ross from CCJRC told us, it is “a light lift and allows people to start education within the population while also allowing people to be familiar with the facility.”<sup>99</sup> Once necessary stakeholders have established trust and rapport among themselves and with those who are incarcerated, organizations and advocates can strategize on expanding these efforts to include in-person voting opportunities.<sup>100</sup>

**Finding 3. Strong cross-agency partnerships are the key to success. Strong, trusted relationships among organizers, elections officials, corrections staff, and other government agencies are essential.**

There needs to be leaders who are innovative, thoughtful, and supportive of voting rights for all voters.

Denver’s success with jail-based voting is largely due to the coordination efforts of all the key players. That relationship building started almost a decade ago, enabling stakeholders to develop sustained, regular communication and problem-solving processes. Each of them—the DED, the sheriff and the jail program staff, and organizers—recognize and respect the critical function of the other. It is also notable that they were all in agreement and able to collectively shift to a different mode of voting in the jails when that was deemed a more effective approach.

Critically, jail and DED staff genuinely support and believe in these programs. From the corrections perspective, this is an important component of reentry. For the DED, this is simply a component of their mandate to serve all voters.

**Finding 4. Flexible logistics facilitate a smooth process. Effective in-person voting requires considerable logistical planning, and all the stakeholders should be open to adjusting their approach as they learn how to improve the process.**

Implementing in-person polling places in jails can come with different logistical challenges. The key is staying flexible and being committed to iterating new models and strategies to best encourage eligible detainees to vote while balancing staff and volunteers’ security and safety concerns.

In their planning process, jurisdictions should consider:

- Training staff and volunteers to manage the voting process.
- Navigating the security protocols and restrictions within jail facilities to set up the voting rooms.
- Identifying the ballot system model that best suits their needs.
- Developing methods to collect data and track the outcomes of their voting initiatives, including voter registration drives and in-person voting.

When Denver was experimenting with two voting models, Model 1 using ICX tablet voting and Model 2 using printed and issued mail ballots, Sitar observed that it required considerable effort to organize two different models and determine the necessary supplies. However, states and cities can take an important lesson from Denver’s willingness to experiment: finding the right model might not happen on the first attempt, and even if a model works, there could be a more effective and efficient approach that better serves the needs of voters and staff. Like Denver, jurisdictions considering jail-based voting should not shy away from experimenting and refining their approach to achieve better results. Finding the optimal model is worth the effort.

Additionally, collecting and analyzing data is crucial, as it is our hope that future research will provide more concrete quantitative evidence to support the strong anecdotal accounts of jail-based voting’s positive impacts.

**Finding 5. Legislation is preferable but not necessary. Legislation can help mandate the enactment of in-person voting in jails (and with greater enforcement power), but successful in-person voting programs can still be achieved without formal legislative mandates.**

Senate Bill 24-72 is the first of its kind—a statewide mandate for jail voting—and is a model for the country. Of course, Denver’s jail voting program served as both the impetus for the bill as well as evidence of its impact. Remarkably, Denver achieved this without specific legislation, demonstrating that jurisdictions can enact jail voting without legislation.

**Finding 6. Same-day voter registration is important. Same-day voter registration can increase the number of people who participate in the voting process.**

Offering same-day registration and in-person voting allows many more people in jails to vote. In the past, with just a mail ballot available, eligible voters in jail couldn't avail themselves of same-day registration because they had to vote by absentee ballot. However, with in-person voting, they could register and vote at the same time. This was especially helpful given the transient nature of the jail population. Before, people would register in advance but leave the jail before the election started. Now, all they need is a letter from the warden to provide proof of residency.

**Finding 7. Voter education is an ongoing challenge. Ensuring that voters in jail have access to information about candidates and ballot measures remains a continuous challenge with legal red tape.**

Despite efforts, lack of information continues to be a significant problem for voters in jails. It is somewhat unclear why information is failing to reach them, and this may be an area that warrants further exploration. According to CCJRC, one contributing factor was the lack of clear written standards on what voter education material was acceptable and what was not. As a result, some of its voter education materials were accepted, while others were not, with city attorneys having full discretion over the approval process.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, the CCJRC survey revealed that even when materials were given to the jails, many people in jails reported not seeing them at all.<sup>102</sup> This may reflect a need for greater commitment from the Sheriff Department and jail staff to ensure that materials are properly distributed, especially before elections.

Overall, there appears to be a need to expand and increase voter education to maximize the impact of jail voting. As CCJRC has recommended, in addition to handing out materials, there should be increased civic education in the jails. It is possible that the new bill will allow more candidates and issue-related materials to get to incarcerated voters, which would help provide them with the necessary resources.

## Conclusion

The achievements in jail-based voting, made possible through the partnership between CCJRC, LWV, the DED, and the Sheriff Department, offer invaluable insights and lessons. As Denver continues to build momentum and make inroads in this area—including through Senate Bill 24-72,<sup>103</sup> which would make Colorado the first state to require county jails to conduct in-person voting—several key aspects of their processes offer vital lessons. These include strategies for introducing jail-based voting, building effective partnerships, and addressing implementation concerns. By studying these components and the success of Denver's program, we demonstrate a pathway for other jurisdictions to expand access and enfranchise people in jails.

## Appendix: Timeline of Jail-Based Voting in Denver, Colorado

- **2005:** SB05-206,<sup>104</sup> an omnibus election bill, passes, including a provision advocated for by CCJRC that allows people in jail serving a misdemeanor sentence to vote.<sup>105</sup>
- **2006:** CCJRC launches its “Voting with Conviction” campaign, “the only civic engagement campaign in Colorado.”<sup>106</sup> It is dedicated to helping people with criminal backgrounds register to vote and educating the broader public as well as those involved in voting efforts (such as advocates, elected officials, and government agencies) about the voting rights of people with criminal records.<sup>107</sup>
- **2015:** Director of the DED Amber McReynolds, Colorado Director of Elections Judd Choate, DSD, CCJRC, and LWV begin to discuss forming a partnership to expand jail-based voting.<sup>108</sup>
- **2016:** CCJRC, as part of its “Voting with Conviction” campaign and in partnership with the DED, DSD, and LWV, conducts its first voter registration drives at Denver County Jail (DCJ) and Denver Detention Center (DDC).<sup>109</sup>
  - CCJRC also produces a voting video that plays on the inmate educational channel.<sup>110</sup>
- **2017:** Building off the work of Juston Cooper (CCJRC) and Alex Landau (CCJRC), Jasmine Ross (CCJRC) and Stuart Clubb (DED) develop an award-winning blueprint for jailed-based, in-person voting for DCJ and DDC.
- **2018:**
  - **May 29, 2018:** CCJRC, Common Cause, and other community allies successfully advocate for the passage of SB18-150,<sup>111</sup> which goes into effect on July 1, 2019.
    - Allows individuals who are on parole (and thus not eligible to register or vote) to pre-register. Once parole ends, pre-registrants are automatically registered to vote.
    - Requires parole and probation officers to provide information on how individuals can pre-register (if parolee) or register to vote, how to update their voter registration record, how to cast a ballot, and how to find information on voting.
  - **July 31, 2018:** Pursuant to a negotiation with CCJRC and several legislators, the Colorado secretary of state adopts election rules that require, beginning with the 2018 General Election, county clerks to:<sup>112</sup>
    - Make an effort to coordinate with their sheriff’s departments to help people in jail register to vote.
    - Include in their mail ballot plans how they will provide voting information, facilitate voter registration, and deliver and collect mail ballots from people in jails.
  - Voter registration drives in jails continue with a small team composed of the DED, DSD, CCJRC, and LWV.
- **2019:**
  - **May 28, 2019:** CCJRC, Common Cause, and other community allies successfully advocate for the passage of HB19-1266,<sup>113</sup> which goes into effect on July 1, 2019:
    - Allows people on parole to register to vote and vote.
    - Requires parole officers to provide information on how individuals can register to vote, how to update their voter registration record, how to cast a ballot, and how to find information on voting.
    - CCJRC starts registering people to vote at parole offices.



- **2020:**
  - **November 2, 2020:** Denver County Jail hosts its first in-person voting event with the help of the DED, DSD, CCJRC, and LWV.<sup>114</sup>
  - **November 3, 2020:** Denver Detention Center hosts its first in-person voting event with the help of the DED, DSD, CCJRC, and LWV.<sup>115</sup>
- **2021:** SB 21-250<sup>116</sup> codifies the secretary of state's 2018 temporary election rules, requiring county clerks to:<sup>117</sup>
  - Make an effort to coordinate with their sheriff's departments to help people in jail register to vote.
  - Include in their election plans how they will provide voting information, facilitate voter registration, and deliver and collect mailed ballots from people in jails.
- **2022:** In-person, jail-based voting is halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **2023:**
  - **March 29, 2023:** Denver Detention Center hosts an in-person voting event for the 2023 April municipal election.<sup>118</sup>
  - **March 30, 2023:** Denver County Jail hosts an in-person voting event for the 2023 April municipal election.<sup>119</sup>
  - **May 31, 2023:** Denver Detention Center hosts an in-person voting event for the 2023 June mayoral runoff election.<sup>120</sup>
  - **June 1, 2023:** Denver County Jail hosts an in-person voting event for the 2023 June mayoral runoff election.<sup>121</sup>
  - **November 1, 2023, at DDC and November 2, 2023, at DCJ:** Denver County Jail and Denver Detention Center host in-person voting events for the 2023 coordinated election.
  - **June 6, 2023:** The governor signs SB 23-276,<sup>122</sup> which:
    - Adds additional requirements for counties' election plans to include information on how it plans to provide electronic tablets for people in jails (for applicable counties).
    - Requires reporting on the number of eligible voters who registered to vote in the previous year and number of voters who voted in the last November election.
  - **September 23, 2023:** Secretary of state adopts a new rule that requires data collection requirements from county clerks, including number of ballots delivered, ballots received, and voter registration forms received from the jails.<sup>123</sup>
- **2024:**
  - **January 22, 2024:** Senator Julie Gonzales, who has been working with CCJRC and America Votes, introduces SB24-072 to the Colorado State Legislature,<sup>124</sup> which would require:
    - County jails to set up in-person, jail-based polling stations.
    - A jail staffer to be the designated lead to facilitate the voting events.
    - Information to be disseminated to those in jails about their eligibility to vote and how to register.
  - **February 28, 2024:** Denver Detention Center hosts in-person voting events for the 2024 presidential primary election.<sup>125</sup>
  - **February 29, 2024:** Denver County Jail hosts in-person voting events for the 2024 presidential primary election.<sup>126</sup>
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