

# Mail balloting saves millions, study shows

February 8 2011, By Diane Carman

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The Buechner Institute for Governance at the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado Denver has released a report commissioned by the Elections Best Practices and Vision Commission that found the cost of mail-in ballot elections was nearly 19 percent less than in-person voting.

The average cost per registered voter in the 2010 midterm election in Colorado was \$6.70. If the election had been conducted exclusively via mail-in ballots, the cost would have been \$1.05 less per voter, the study found, saving an estimated \$4 million in election costs statewide.

The study, conducted by Peggy Cuciti, PhD, of the Buechner Institute staff and Professor Allan Wallis, PhD, of the CU Denver School of Public Affairs, is titled *Changing the Way Colorado Votes*. It was designed to answer questions about the potential impact of changing voter registration deadlines to be closer to election day and determining the effects of all-mail balloting in elections.

“It is a challenge to accurately track the cost of voting and to project how it might change with adoption of all-mail balloting,” said Wallis. “We hope our study will inform current debate in the state regarding election reform.”

The research included opinion surveys of county clerks, county party chairs and voting/civic activists. A detailed analysis of election costs was conducted in 12 counties representing 80 percent of the state’s population.

The researchers found that extending the deadline for voter registration was strongly supported by [election](#) activists (73 percent in favor), while a majority of clerks (64 percent) and party chairs (57 percent) oppose it.

As for moving to all-mail balloting, 92 percent of county clerks were in favor. Among party chairs, support was much lower with 44 percent supporting the change. Only 40 percent of voting activists favor such a move.

All three survey groups agreed that mail-in balloting likely would increase voter turnout.

“I, for one, think it’s an excellent examination of the questions posed,” said Judd Choate, Colorado elections director in a letter to members of the Elections Best Practices and Vision Commission, which was appointed by former Colorado Secretary of State Bernie Buescher and is charged with developing recommendations for effectively administering elections across the state. “I am particularly taken with the depth of analysis on the question of all-mail. This is the definitive study, likely ever completed, on the cost of all-mail as compared to other voting methods ...”

**More information:** The study focused primarily on data gathered during the 2010 elections.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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