Protecting Colorado Communities
What Faith Communities Need to Know
NOVEMBER 2026 ELECTION SERIES

**The information contained herein is general information and not legal advice. If you are seeking legal advice about your specific situation, you may consult an attorney.*

This series of our *What Faith Communities Need to Know* special briefings will feature more in-depth analysis on matters related to the November 3rd election. While we include analysis and recommendations in our annual Vote Your Values Guide, our hope is that this series of briefings will provide additional context and information on policy matters during the upcoming election and beyond.

What's on the Ballot?

An organization called Advance Colorado is connected to eight of the 14 ballot questions that voters will weigh in on during the November election. Two of those questions would have profound changes for law enforcement in Colorado: Amendment 81 and Amendment 132. Advance Colorado suggests the amendments are about public safety, but we think it's important for faith communities and people of faith and conscience to know what the amendments really do, and consider whether they actually make our communities safer and more protected.

Investigative reporting by the Colorado Times Recorder and others have provided context for who is behind the organization and the prominent role they play in the Colorado ballot. What they discovered is that the depth of Advance Colorado's operation across legal, policy, academic, and media domains reveals a well-coordinated and influential policy apparatus. Civically engaged faith communities and people of faith and conscience need to know how this apparatus is shaping the policies that they'll vote on this year, and likely in future years.

Amendment 81 and Amendment 132 are just two of the eight initiatives that representatives of Advance Colorado helped put on the ballot this year, and they are important to talk about because while they are marketed to us as "common-sense" community safety policies, they actually have the potential to be very harmful.

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What do experts say?

PROPOSITION 132 WILL NOT REDUCE OVERDOSE DEATHS OR INVEST RESOURCES IN OUR COMMUNITIES; INSTEAD, IT WILL LIKELY INCREASE OVERDOSE DEATHS AND REQUIRE SHIFTING TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF GENERAL FUND DOLLARS TO CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.

In our Vote Your Values Guide analysis, we explained that Prop. 132 will not reduce drug use, stop sales, or guarantee access to treatment. In fact, a Colorado-specific analysis by public health expert Dr. Joshua Barocas shows that Prop 132 could result in 1,718 additional overdose deaths in the next five years. Dr. Barocas noted that his findings were "consistent with a growing body of public health research indicating that punitive approaches to substance use and substance use disorders" actually increase overdose risk. Those approaches "disrupt treatment access and continuity of care" and, in the case of Prop 132, they don't really distinguish between people who use substances and the high-level drug distributors they purport to target.

Decades of evidence show that harsher penalties do not reduce drug supply or demand. We already tried this strategy: when Colorado increased penalties for fentanyl possession in 2022, state data shows that fentanyl deaths sadly continued to rise in the following years. Harsher laws failed to protect our communities – the exact outcome that public health experts predicted.

While Prop 132 pays lip service to the need for treatment access and continuity of care, it doesn't include any funding for treatment or to cover the costs of enforcement. In fact, the independent analysis in the Bluebook shows that significant public funds would have to be diverted to pay for Prop 132 in form of additional spending by the Department of Corrections.

We know that resources, connection, and evidence-backed public health strategies are what can actually make our communities safer from fentanyl – not punitive and costly policies that push struggling people further to the margins. As people of faith and conscience, we are called to those margins to provide real support and care for our neighbors, and Prop 132 does not help us do that.

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What else do experts say?

AMENDMENT 81 HARMS COMMUNITY TRUST, UNDERMINES DUE PROCESS, AND PUTS VAGUE, UNWORKABLE STANDARDS INTO OUR CONSTITUTION THAT WILL LEAD TO CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND LAWSUITS.

In our Vote Your Values Guide analysis, we explained that Amendment 81 goes far beyond targeting violent or repeat offenders. Amendment 81 undermines civil rights and the presumption of innocence, burdens local government, and fails to protect citizens and non-citizens alike from federal overreach. Significantly, Amendment 81 puts this into the Colorado Constitution, making it very difficult to refine the policy except by later amendment.

As the ACLU of Colorado explains, Amendment 81 affects the liberty of citizens and non-citizens alike. Under our laws, every individual enjoys a presumption of innocence until the state can prove their guilt. Under this system, charges alone could trigger a federal immigration investigation. And it's not just those without immigration status – if your status cannot be determined in a short period of time, that could also trigger a federal immigration investigation. Particularly when enforcement is bringing violence into Colorado neighborhoods, that alone should trigger skepticism. We do not want to live in a Colorado where you have to "show your papers" or the presumption of innocence becomes meaningless. Coloradans value our liberty and know that this is not what community safety looks like.

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Why should we be concerned?

In policy, details matter. How a policy is designed and how it approaches a community concern tells us a lot more about the goals behind it than any slogan. As designed, Prop 132 won't actually achieve its stated goal to reduce death, but it will continue to shift resources from public health and the things that actually support recovery. As designed, Amendment 81 will not actually make our communities safer, but further erode public trust in law enforcement and use our local and state resources to support federal law enforcement practices that harm vulnerable communities. True safety for our communities lies in resources, relationships, and our ability to protect our civil rights.

What can faith communities do?

Perhaps the most important thing to is to vote, and to encourage and support your community in registering to vote, accessing the ballot, and making a plan to vote. It is also important to talk to your communities about who is behind the ballot questions and what the experts are saying about what really supports safety and dignity for Colorado communities.

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