



**35th Annual
National Conference
Orlando, FL**

2019 Professional Practices Program

Interactive Sample Ballot

Denver, CO

Submitted by:

**Joe Szuszwalak
Denver Elections Division
Communications Specialist
200 W 14th Ave, Ste 100
Denver, CO
Joe.Szuszwalak@denvergov.org
www.DenverVotes.org**

Introduction

The Denver Elections Division seeks to provide the highest level of election services to the citizens we serve. Our culture of innovation and problem-solving through engagement with our local community and stakeholders leads to continual improvement and solutions. Recently, we identified several areas for improvement in providing sample ballot materials to our voters.

A primary concern of voters during “off-cycle” smaller elections, such as our recent Municipal Election in May and Municipal Run-off Election in June, is a lack of information on candidates and issues. We were able to provide an interactive sample ballot as a solution to this, and several other areas identified for improvement with positive results.

Addressing voter needs

When our office is not conducting an active election one of the many areas our staff works on is community engagement. We engage our voters through a variety of community presentations, meetings, and work with advisory boards such as our Election Advisory Committee, comprised of community members, activists, and local non-profits. Before the Municipal election cycle, our team identified three areas for improvement:

- Providing voters with an easy way to research candidates and issues on the ballot
- Providing sample ballot materials in additional languages
- Providing sample ballot materials in an accessible format for voters with visual impairment

Through our engagement with community members, stakeholders, and directly with voters we discovered that one of the barriers to non-presidential elections is a lack of easily accessible information on candidates and issues. Voters admitted to either under voting specific races or skipping smaller elections altogether when they felt they did not have enough information to make an educated choice.

Our community groups and stakeholder meetings also revealed that our previous method for distributing sample ballots, as a PDF file, was not accessible or compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additionally, it created confusion for some voters as this file was a “combo” ballot which included all races in the City and County of Denver on it. This meant that voters would not only see the races specific to their precinct but saw all races citywide.

Additionally, our engagement has recently shown that English and Spanish no longer serve the language needs of our community. We were asked to provide materials in Vietnamese, Somali, Russian, Arabic, and Amharic.

Implementing solutions

Through the creativity of our team members and with the cooperation of one of our vendors, Democracy Live, we were able to implement a solution that addressed all three areas of improvement. By repurposing modules already in existence for part of our emergency ballot system we created an interactive sample ballot.

The most significant benefit to most voters with the interactive sample ballot is the ability to click on each candidate and initiative to learn more and access additional resources. This is the truly “interactive” part of the ballot as not only can you click through to learn more, but each ballot is customized to the individual voter. To access the interactive sample ballot voters first enter their address, this allows the specific precinct and ballot to be displayed for that voter. Previously, the posting of a “combo” ballot as a PDF document resulted in confusion as it would show all races on the ballot without any filtering to specific voter precincts.

Once the voter has selected their address a text page is displayed allowing voters to select races, candidates, and issues to learn more. Each candidate and question on the ballot has a unique page that includes links to the candidate’s official website, social media channels, and a YouTube video of their forum. Our office partners with another city agency, Denver Channel 8, to produce non-partisan videos of candidate and issue forums.

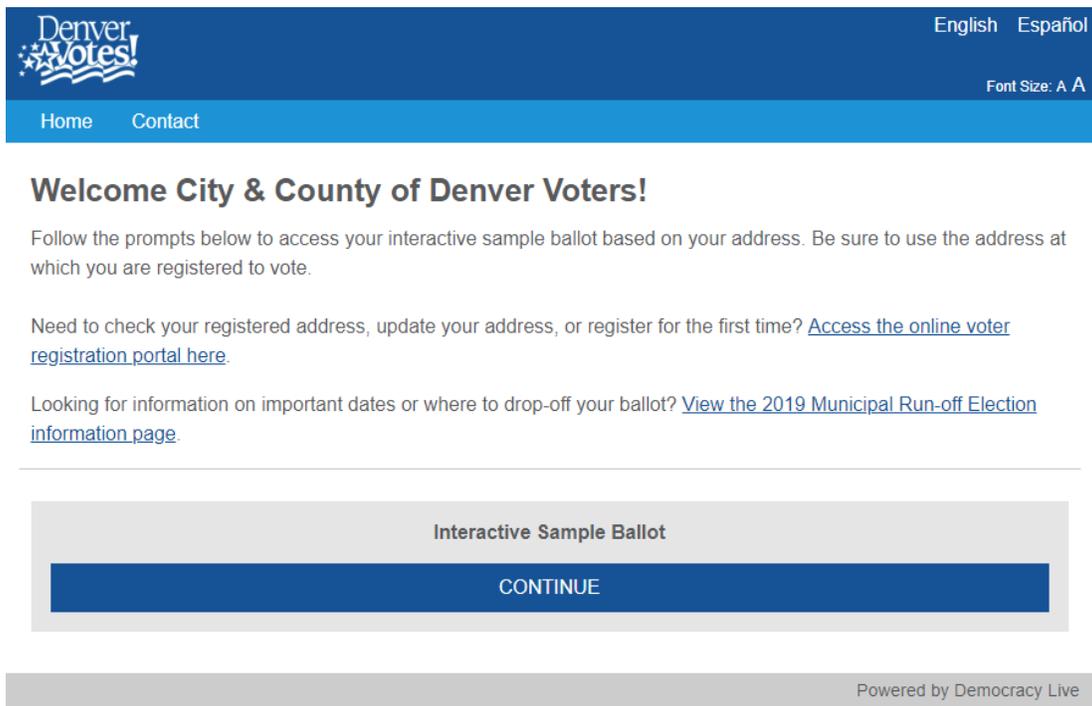
We were able to work with our vendor to ensure that all these capabilities are fully compliant with ADA requirements and serves the needs of voters with a visual impairment. The online module also allowed us to easily produce identical versions of this information in several languages beyond English and Spanish.

Use during the Municipal Election and beyond

Beyond receiving many positive comments through our social media channels and voter e-mails we were able to track significant usage amongst voters during these Municipal elections. 14,383 voters accessed the interactive sample ballot, which we would consider a great success! Exact numbers on the previously used sample ballot PDF file were not recorded, but we suspect it was significantly lower than this current number based on conversations with voters.

Due to the success of more than 14,000 voters accessing the interactive sample ballot we will continue to implement this in all future elections, including translations to a variety of languages in addition to English and Spanish.

Supporting Materials



The screenshot shows the Denver Votes! website. At the top left is the Denver Votes! logo. At the top right are language options for English and Español, and a font size selector set to 'A A'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'Contact' links. The main content area features a heading 'Welcome City & County of Denver Voters!' followed by instructions to follow prompts for an interactive sample ballot. It includes links for voter registration and election information. A large blue button labeled 'CONTINUE' is centered in a grey box. At the bottom right of the page, it says 'Powered by Democracy Live'.

- **Access the live sample ballot:**
 - <https://sites.omniballot.us/08031/app/home> or <http://bit.ly/2019MuniSample>



- Interactive Sample Ballot
- **View our introductory video:**
 - https://youtu.be/zn_gAMH673E