



MODIFYING OR ELIMINATING SCHOOL BOARD TERM LIMITS FAQ

The Colorado Constitution imposes a general limitation of “two consecutive terms in office” for school board members and other officials whose terms are more than two years in duration; however, the Constitution also gives voters an opportunity to lengthen, shorten, or eliminate term limits. The following are some of the most commonly asked questions about modifying or eliminating term limits. This FAQ is a resource for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Specific questions should be referred to the school district’s own legal counsel. Visit CASB’s [Elections](#) webpage for additional resources.

Samples

- [Sample Resolution Modifying Term Limits](#)
- [Sample Resolution Eliminating Term Limits](#)
- [Sample Ballot Questions](#)

Q1: How many terms can a school board member serve?

A: Term limits for school board members (and other local elected officials) were adopted in 1994, and are found in Colo. Const. Art XVIII, § 11. Term limits were enacted to broaden opportunities for public service, and assure that elected officials are responsive to citizens of their governments.

According to the Colorado Constitution Article XVIII, Section 11: “No non-judicial elected official of any county, city and county, city, town, school district, service authority, or any other political subdivision of the state of Colorado... shall serve more than two consecutive terms in office, except that with respect to terms of office which are two years or shorter in duration, no such elected official shall serve more than three consecutive terms in office.”

Article XVIII, Section 11 also states that terms are considered consecutive unless they are four years apart.

Despite the stated limits, the provision also allows voters of any such political subdivision to lengthen, shorten or eliminate the limitations on terms of office. For more information on how a board can change the term limits by putting the question to the voters, [review our resource](#).

Q2: How long are school board member terms?

A: School board members are elected for terms of four years, “and until a successor has been elected and qualified.”¹ However, some Colorado school districts may have members who are elected for terms of six years, as was previously standard under Colorado law. Any district that elects school board members for terms of six years as of July 1, 1999 “may continue electing directors for terms of six years” until the term limit is changed.²

¹ C.R.S. § 22-31-105.

² *Id.*



Q3: How do partial term limits—caused by appointments to fill vacancies or resignations—impact term limits?

A: The Office of the Attorney General has concluded that the constitutional term limits apply only to full terms of office, not partial terms of office that result from interim appointments made to fill a vacancy. [Op. Att’y Gen. No. 2000-2 \(February 9, 2000\), 11-13.](#) However, a person who resigns from office will be deemed to have served a complete term. [Op. Att’y Gen. No. 2005-04 \(August 16, 2005\), 4-6.](#)

- **Example 1:** A board member who is appointed to serve out the remainder of a 4-year term and is subsequently elected to serve an additional 4-year term is eligible to run for a third and final term because the partial term of office resulting from their initial board appointment does not count towards the term limit calculations.
- **Example 2:** A board member who has served one full four-year term and resigned from serving a second four-year term is considered to have served two complete and consecutive four-year terms. This board member could be appointed to fill a vacancy, as partial terms of office do not count towards term limitations, but the board member would not be eligible to run in the next election.

Q4: How long must a term-limited director wait before running for office again?

A: Term-limited directors need to wait **four years** before taking office again. For example, a board member who termed off in 2021 could run again in 2025. Unless voters within a district have modified or eliminated board term limits, board of education directors cannot serve more than two consecutive terms in office. "Office" refers to an elected institution as a whole and not a particular district, and terms are considered consecutive unless they are at least four years apart. Accordingly, a term-limited director would have to wait at least four years before running for office again. Colo. Const. Art XVIII, § 11. See also, [Op. Att’y Gen. No. 00-5 \(July 10, 2000\).](#)

Q5: When may a school district ask voters to modify or eliminate term limits?

A: A school district may place a question on the ballot to modify or eliminate board member term limits during:

1. the regular biennial school election (November of odd-numbered years);
2. the general election (November of even-numbered years); or
3. an election called for that purpose at any other time during the year (special election).³

Q6: What is the process to modify or eliminate term limits?

A: State law does not prescribe the procedures a school district must follow to modify or eliminate term limits. However, when a school district refers questions to electors, the procedures for municipal initiatives govern.⁴ The school district should consult with the county clerk of the county in which the district’s administrative office is located to discuss the applicability of municipal initiative procedures to the district’s ballot question on term limits.⁵

³ Colo. Const. Art. XVIII, § 11(2); C.R.S. §§ 1-1-104(46); 22-31-101(7); 22-31-103 and 22-31-104.

⁴ C.R.S. § 22-30-104(4).

⁵ *Id.*



Given sweeping changes to state election laws that mandate the use of mail ballots, the Colorado Secretary of State's office has taken the position that any school board election to modify or eliminate board member term limits must be coordinated by the county clerk.⁶

Q7: What is the timeline for a ballot question to be included in a regular biennial school election or in a general election?

A: Ballot questions, which do not involve financial matters as mentioned in Article 10, § 20(3), can be brought in a November Election or a special election in May. Below are a few of the deadlines, and all deadlines can be found in our [2025 Ballot Issue \(TABOR\) timeline](#) for this year's coordinated election on November 4, 2025.

- The school district must enter into an agreement with the county clerk and recorder for the election no later than 70 days prior to the scheduled election.⁷
- No later than 60 days before the election, the school district's designated election official must certify the order of the ballot and ballot content (including the wording of the ballot questions) and adhere to the other certification requirements outlined in C.R.S. 1-5-203(3).
- The district's designated election official or the coordinated election official must publish notice of the election no later than 20 days before the election.⁸ Publication of an election notice by the county clerk satisfies this requirement.⁹ Sample ballots may be used as notices if they contain all of the required information in C.R.S. 1-5-205.

Q8: What is the timeline for a ballot question to be included in a special election?

A: The timelines listed above also apply in special elections. If a special election is called on a date when other political subdivisions are also conducting an election and the electors or boundaries overlap, there may be an opportunity to conduct a coordinated election and save on election costs.

Additionally, the district must consider other issues when determining the date by which a special election will be held to modify or eliminate term limits. First, to hold a special election to modify or eliminate term limits before an upcoming regular biennial school board election, the school board should initiate the special election no later than the spring. The school district's designated election official should certify the ballot content at the end of April and the election should then be held at the end of June. With this timeline, the special election results will be finalized prior to when candidates may begin circulating their candidate petitions (approximately the beginning of August).¹⁰ Exact dates will vary depending on the date of the regular biennial school election.

Q8: How should the ballot question be worded?

⁶ C.R.S. §§ 1-7-116 and 22-31-103(1).

⁷ C.R.S. § 1-7-116(2).

⁸ C.R.S. § 1-5-205.

⁹ C.R.S. § 1-5-205(1.4).

¹⁰ C.R.S. § 22-31-107(2).



A: The Colorado Constitution does not dictate any particular wording for a ballot question to modify or eliminate term limits. However, the wording for any ballot question must include the “title,” a brief statement that fairly and accurately represents the true intent and meaning of the question, and the “submission clause” (i.e., the language attached to the title to form a question that can be answered by a “yes” or “no”).

Q9: What are the costs associated with a ballot question to modify or eliminate term limits?

A: Costs will vary and are dependent upon the size of the eligible electorate in the school district and the agreement reached with the county clerk to conduct the election.

COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
2253 S. Oneida Street, Ste. 300, Denver, CO 80224
(303) 832-1000 | www.casb.org

This document is a resource for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Specific questions should be referred to the school district’s legal counsel.

February 2025
© Colorado Association of School Boards