

**2026 Legislative Priority Proposal**  
**Updated: 9/15/25**

<b>Protection for Elected Officials from Political Violence</b>	
<b>Arapahoe County (Commissioner Jessica Campbell)</b>	
Preferred Contact:	jcampbell@arapahoegov.com
Co-Sponsoring Counties/Commissioners:	N/A
Who is your subject matter expert?	N/A
Has this proposal been approved by your BoCC?	Yes.
Have you reviewed the CCI Instructional Memo?	Yes.
Describe the problem your proposal will solve.	Violent threats and violence against elected officials have been on the rise for almost a decade. In part, this can be attributed to an increase in the violent language about opponents used by candidates for and holders of elected office. Such rhetoric and violence create a chilling effect in dissent, in the number of people willing to run for office, and ultimately the quality of our democracy.
Areas of Impact:	Government efficacy and elected officials' safety.
What is the ultimate source of this problem?	Nonexistent statute.
What is your initial proposal to solve this problem?	<p>In recognition of the power and unique position of those who run for and hold elected office, the enhanced credence and deference given to their words, and the chilling effect violent outcomes from violent rhetoric have on our democracy, we propose Colorado deter such individuals from using language that threatens, supports, and/or encourages such behaviors by criminalizing the public communication of such violence.</p> <p>Specifically, we propose modifying existing statute to make it a criminal offense for candidates for, holders of, and former holders of elected office to publicly—be it printed, recorded, or in live public delivery—use language that threatens, supports, or encourages any form of violence against candidates for, holders of, and former holders of elected office.</p>
Please provide sample language for this solution.	<b>C.R.S § 1-13-726 Amendment:</b> Revise title and add new section that states: "It is unlawful for candidates for, holders of, and former holders of elected office to publicly—be it printed, recorded, or in live public delivery—use language that threatens, supports, or encourages any form of

	violence against candidates for, holders of, and former holders of elected office for performing their official duties. Each such offense is a class 1 misdemeanor."
Are there any solutions that do not require state-level legislation? Has your county explored these alternatives?	No. However, in Colorado elected officials can legally have their personal information redacted from certain public records to improve personal safety. For example, the Colorado Secretary of State temporarily shut down the state's campaign finance database in the wake of the Minnesota assassinations to better ensure legislator safety. Since then, 40-55 Colorado officials have submitted requests to have their personal information removed from the state database before it's turned back on.
Has CCI or any other organizations sought a solution to this problem before?	To our knowledge, neither CCI, nor other organizations have sought a solution to this problem.
What possible organization(s) would <b>support</b> your proposed solution?	We think this is an issue that should have broad local elected official support (i.e. CML, SDA, CCAT). As well as support from democracy-centered, good-governance interest groups such as ACLU and the Bell Policy Center.
What possible organization(s) would <b>oppose</b> your proposed solution?	Potentially, First Amendment rights groups.
Have you spoken with any legislators about your proposed solution? If so, what was their response?	We have not.
What are the financial implications of this <b>problem</b> to your county?  Are there any financial implications to this <b>solution</b> either?	Language that threatens, supports, or encourages violence from elected officials toward other elected officials doesn't have any direct financial implications on Arapahoe County. Neither does making that language unlawful have any financial implications on Arapahoe County.
What are the financial implications of this <b>problem</b> to any other impacted parties?  What are the financial implications of	Language that threatens, supports, or encourages violence from elected officials toward other elected officials doesn't have any direct financial implications on other impacted parties. Using <a href="#">HB22-1273</a> , making such language unlawful could result in increases in workloads for local governments and the Justice Department with minimal financial implications.

<p>this <b>solution</b> to any other impacted parties? Please consider any relevant Colorado State Departments.</p>	
<p>Staff Feedback</p>	<p><u>Risk / Difficulty</u>: High – As proposed, I have concerns about this proposal for several reasons. It criminalizes speech by politicians based on content of that speech, which, in my view, will create First Amendment Issues. Colorado law also addresses this behavior in several ways: <b>Menacing</b> for placing someone in fear of imminent serious bodily injury; <b>Stalking</b> for credible threats and repeated contact; <b>Harassment</b> including electronic contacts in certain circumstances; Inciting a riot for urging a group to imminent riot; <b>Retaliation</b> against an elected official already exists as <a href="#">SB21-064</a>; and Election-official protections and anti-doxxing from <a href="#">HB22-1273</a>. Moreover, any bill that a) creates a new crime and/or b) increases penalties for existing crimes faces strict scrutiny by the current General Assembly. Most bills of this nature fail in the House. Overall, we can expect bipartisan resistance to this proposal and near-certain litigation if it is focused on conduct of elected officials. Some ways that we could modify the proposal and possibly avoid First Amendment Conflicts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase penalties of existing crimes when the offender is an elected official, former officeholder, or candidate, and the victim is an elected official, candidate, or their immediate family. (High difficulty)</li> <li>• Amend HB22-1273's framework to cover elected officials and candidates, not just election workers. Prohibit publishing personally identifying information with intent to threaten, coerce, or substantially impede official duties, and add a civil cause of action plus rapid injunctive relief. This would need very clear definitions (High difficulty)</li> </ul> <p><u>Time Commitment</u>: High – We would need willing bill sponsors and a great deal of stakeholding. While there is a possible supportive coalition in local government associations (CML, SDA, CASE, CASB, Sheriffs, etc), there will be many organizations that might take issue, including the ACLU. If we want to create a new crime or increased penalties, we will need to engage CDAC, Public Defenders, Criminal Defense Bar, and others.</p>