

# Colorado Public Libraries and the 2004 November Elections

Donna R. Walker

LRS Intern, University of Washington Information School

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Colorado voters had a mixed response to requests for increased funding for libraries across the state. 5 of 8 ballot initiatives to raise mill levies passed, and one bond initiative failed. Voters in the Florence area approved a ballot initiative to create a new library district, while Mesa County voters rejected a bond issue for a new library and also a mill levy increase for maintenance projects. TABOR language was not as prevalent on this year's ballots with only two library systems asking for TABOR overrides and only one being successful. Table 1 summarizes election results by type of ballot measure. Table 2 gives details about locations and voting percentages for public library measures on the November ballot.

**Table 1: Summary of Colorado November 2004 Election Results for Public Libraries**

Type of ballot measure	Passed	Failed
Increased mill levy for operations, collections, maintenance or improvement	5	3
Bond issue	0	1

Libraries that failed to pass their ballot measures were looking for voter support for maintaining or expanding services. Cortez Public Library was hoping to double their operating budget to bring them "up to average compared to other public libraries in the state." While they will retain current funding, failure of the referendum means that their "services will stay the same for the next few years."

**Table 2: Library Issues on November 2004 Ballots in Colorado**

Location	Ballot Issue	Votes	
		Yes	No
Basalt Regional Library District	Mill levy increase*	<b>68.6%</b>	31.4%
Cortez Public Library – Montezuma County	Mill levy to create regional library authority*	49.4%	<b>50.6%</b>
Estes Valley Public Library District – Larimer County	Mill levy increase	<b>55.7%</b>	44.3%
Florence Public Library	Mill levy to create new library district	<b>58.1%</b>	41.9%
Las Animas - Bent County Library District	Mill levy increase	46.9%	<b>53.1%</b>
Mesa County Public Library District	Mill levy increase	49.3%	<b>50.7%</b>
	Bond issue for new building	49.3%	<b>50.7%</b>
Montrose Library District	Mill levy increase	<b>54.2%</b>	45.8%
Pitkin County Library	Mill levy increase	<b>70.8%</b>	29.2%

\*ballot measure contained language to override TABOR limitations



Libraries that passed their ballot initiatives will be using the new funds in a variety of ways. Ed Volz, Library Director for the Estes Valley Public Library District in Larimer County reports that their mill levy increase of 37% will increase revenue in 2005 by \$238,794. In Montrose, where 54% of the voters approved a mill levy increase, the increased funds will be used to replace depleted trust monies. These funds will also be used to expand hours and staff, upgrade computers and allow for long-delayed facility maintenance, according to Paul Paladino, Director of the Montrose Library District. Likewise, Pitkin County voters approved a mill levy proposal with over a 70% yes vote that will allow for more staff and upgrading technology. Basalt's yes vote will double district revenues according to Robb Heckel, Director of Basalt Regional Library District.

One of the big stories of the 2004 election was in Fremont County where Florence area voters approved an initiative to form and fund a new library district. With this vote, the new John C. Fremont Library District will increase revenues from approximately \$48,000 to about \$150,000. Florence Public Library volunteer Jennifer Miley, who led the "Your Library – Yes" campaign, said "We gave the voters their options--no library or a new library with double the space. They made the right choice." Miley also attributed the successful vote to keeping the mill levy on the low side and "getting the word out."

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**CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE**

Keith Curry Lance • Director

Library Research Service • 201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 • Denver, Colorado 80203-1799

Phone 303.866.6737 • E-mail: [Lance\\_K@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Lance_K@cde.state.co.us) • Web site: [www.LRS.org](http://www.LRS.org)

Design, layout, and production by Fabian R. Maes • Phone: 303.866.6906 • E-mail: [Maes\\_F@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Maes_F@cde.state.co.us)

