

Daily Camera

Let common sense prevail in city and county ballot measures (Editorial)

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PUBLISHED: October 11, 2026 at 4:00 AM MDT

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‘Yes’ on Boulder County Ballot Question 200

Ballot Question 200 asks whether the number of Boulder County Commissioners should be increased from three to five. The answer is yes.

Boulder County’s three commissioners represent more than 330,000 constituents. Compare that, say, to the City of Boulder, which has just over 100,000 people and nine members of the City Council, or Louisville, a town of 21,000 with a seven-member council.

The county, of course, is different from these cities. But the county is still a massive governing body. Its annual budget is more than \$745 million, way more than even the City of Boulder’s \$552 million budget. And so much of what the county is charged with overseeing is imperative: The Sheriff’s Department, the District Attorney, Boulder County Public Health, affordable housing programs and partnerships, conservation and open space, the massive infrastructure on county land, and so much more.

Basically, while the county’s work may seem abstract to those of us who live within a city’s limits, in reality, it plays a huge part in the cohesion of our shared community and many of the programs and services that are essential to our collective vitality.

Tasking just three commissioners with the job of overseeing this work is a disservice to all of us.

And while much of the commissioners’ work may not be policy decisions, having a broader spectrum of representation, diversity of thought and perspective can change how even “administrative” decisions are made.

It is worth noting that increasing the number of commissioners will carry a cost. The commissioners’ salaries are set by the state at \$158,000 per year. Adding two new commissioners’ salaries and benefits, plus other related expenses, could ultimately cost \$500,000.

That is a large sum, especially considering the county is working on tightening its belt and trimming millions from its spending. But it feels like a small price to pay if we can ensure the commissioners are doing the best possible work for the citizens of Boulder County. (It is also a literal small price, roughly 0.07% of the county’s budget.)

This change is not a panacea. It would not automatically make the commissioners more responsive. It would not automatically increase diversity. It would not automatically fix the county’s budget woes.

But it would give all of us constituents a better shot at addressing these issues — through more elections and by having more commissioners to turn to with our concerns.

Vote “yes” on Boulder County Ballot Question 200.