

**House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs**

**04/20/2026**

**HCR26-1005 Limit Election of Legislators Who Fill Vacancies**

**Typed Text of Testimony Submitted**

<b>Name, Position, Representing</b>	<b>Typed Text of Testimony</b>
<p>Dave Ryan For Colorado Forward Party</p>	<p>Testimony in Support of HCR-1005</p> <p>Good afternoon Chair and members of the committee,</p> <p>My name is Dave Ryan, and I'm writing on behalf of the Colorado Forward Party.</p> <p>We appreciate the legislature's efforts in 2025 to address vacancy appointments through bills like HB25-1315 and HB25-1319. Those bills recognize a real problem: too many Coloradans feel disconnected from how their representatives are chosen when vacancies occur. In the case of Colorado Forward HB25-1319 denied the our ability to have a candidate in the El Paso County Special Election for District 5.</p> <p>Was it legal? Yes.</p> <p>Was it fair to create a novel odd year special election process using convoluted rules and taxpayer dollars used to prevent candidates and voters equal access. It would be hard to imagine an objective voter agreeing.</p> <p>But from a Forward perspective, we believe those solutions"while well intentioned"still leave a core issue unresolved.</p> <p>They attempt to balance party control and voter input, but in doing so, they create complex systems that can still limit participation, exclude voices, and rely on costly special elections that don't always produce broader trust.</p>

	<p>HCR26-1005 offers a different path—one that is simpler, fairer, and more aligned with democratic principles.</p> <p>By allowing a temporary appointment with the clear condition that the appointee cannot run for that same office, we achieve three critical goals:</p> <p>First, we remove the incentive for political insiders to select someone based on future electoral advantage</p> <p>Second, we ensure that voters—not parties—ultimately decide who represents them</p> <p>Third, we avoid costly and low-turnout special elections that place additional burdens on taxpayers</p> <p>This approach is not about left or right.</p> <p>It’s about trust in the process.</p> <p>When the person appointed has no personal stake in holding the office long-term, the focus shifts from political advantage to public service and continuity.</p> <p>And when the next election is open and competitive, every candidate—regardless of party—has a fair opportunity to earn the support of voters.</p> <p>At Forward, we believe that better systems produce better outcomes.</p> <p>HCR26-1005 moves us toward a system that is:</p>
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	<p>More transparent</p> <p>More equitable</p> <p>And more accountable to the people of Colorado</p> <p>We respectfully urge you to support this resolution and give voters a stronger, more trusted voice in their representation.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
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To: Members of the House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Anthony Haas | Colorado Forward Party

Date: April 17, 2026

RE: **Support for HCR 26-1005**

Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HCR 26-1005.

The vacancy committee system exists to solve a practical problem: ensuring that no Colorado district goes unrepresented during the legislative session. When a seat is vacated unexpectedly, we need a mechanism to quickly seat a representative who can advocate for their constituents. This is an important governing function, and the volunteers and local leaders who facilitate this process provide a vital service to the state.

However, detailed, years-long analysis done by the [Colorado Sun](#), and others, of the current composition of the General Assembly shows clearly that the existing process carries an unintended side effect. Over the last several cycles, the vacancy committee has shifted from an emergency backup to a primary point of entry for many members of the legislature. In the current 2026 session, nearly 30% of the members of this body were originally seated via appointment rather than a general election. This means that for almost one-third of our districts, the incumbent was initially chosen by a committee that typically consists of a few dozen people.

HCR 26-1005 addresses this by giving Colorado voters the option to enact a "placeholder" model. This is a pragmatic adjustment that separates the emergency filling of a seat from the long-term electoral process.

If adopted by the General Assembly and passed by the voters of Colorado, HCR 26-1005 will address the unfair incumbency advantage inherent in the current vacancy committee process. Data from the last decade shows that over 90% of vacancy appointees who stand for election go on to win their next race. This is not necessarily a reflection of the voters' original preference, but a testament to the immense structural power of incumbency. HCR 26-1005 ensures that the advantage of incumbency remains a reflection of a public mandate, not a committee appointment.

HCR 26-1005 relieves pressure on local party committees. Currently, vacancy committees are forced to make decisions that could have a significant and lasting impact on representation

within a compressed timeline. They are pressured to find a candidate who is not just a good legislator for the current session, but a viable long-term campaigner. By requiring a placeholder, we allow these committees to focus on finding the best steward for the remaining session days, rather than weighing the long-term political viability of a candidate.

When a vacancy occurs, the subsequent election should be the kind of robust, open competition that Colorado voters expect, and deserve. By removing the appointee from the following ballot, we ensure a level playing field where the entire district—including the over 50% of Colorado voters who are unaffiliated—can evaluate a full field of candidates on equal footing.

This change does not criticize the work of past or present members who entered service via appointment. Instead, it recognizes that our current system has created an externality where the power to choose a long-term representative has shifted too far toward committee rooms.

By adopting the placeholder model, we can maintain the continuity of representation that our sessions require while ensuring that the "incumbent" status remains something earned through a broad, public vote. I urge the committee to support HCR 26-1005 and move this conversation to the voters this November.

Respectfully,

Anthony Haas  
Colorado Forward Party