

Recalls Safeguard Representation of, by, and for the People

Written on behalf of the tens of thousands of citizens we represent, Dana Duggan, Integrity Matters, Jacob Fenton, Palmer Lake for the People, Scott Hiller, Westside Watch, Timothy Lewin, COS Neighborhood Leader, Shawn Sawyer, Tri-Lakes Preservation



In their [March 3rd, 2026 opinion piece](#), Bob Gardner and Wayne Williams argue that recall elections should be reserved only for corruption, criminal conduct, constitutional violations, or clear abuses of power — not for what they dismiss as ordinary policy disagreements. That framing sounds sober. In practice, it narrows the Constitution beyond its design and diverts attention from why recalls exist at all.

Recalls are not criminal trials. They are constitutional safeguards. Colorado law does not require an indictment before voters may withdraw consent. The Constitution does not instruct citizens to endure years of decisions they believe compromise public safety, disregard sustained public opposition, or consistently align with concentrated financial interests. Recalls exist because the Founders understood that representation can deteriorate long before prosecutors intervene.

Thomas Jefferson, founder of the University of Virginia — Wayne Williams' alma mater — wrote,

“The people are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”

It is difficult to reconcile that principle with arguments suggesting citizens must wait passively while votes against their interest mount and confidence in representation erodes. One cannot help but wonder whether Jefferson might blush to hear such a narrowing of the people’s authority from a graduate of his own university.

Gardner and Williams suggest policy disputes belong at the next election. But representation is not a once-every-four-years transaction. It is an ongoing relationship of trust. When voting patterns repeatedly favor development interests despite substantial neighborhood opposition — when evacuation modeling concerns are dismissed, parkland requirements reduced, annexations advanced after public rejection, or bonds approved over sustained objections — voters may reasonably conclude that representation has broken down.

That conclusion is not criminal law. It is political judgment.

Dana Duggan of Integrity Matters has stated, “When elected officials forget who they serve, citizens must remind them.” That reminder is not radical. It is constitutional.

Public campaign finance reports reveal significant concentration of donations from development-related interests for many candidates. When subsequent votes align predictably with those interests, citizens are entitled to question whether independence has been compromised. Accountability is not hostility to private property rights. It is a defense of equal representation.

Scott Hiller of Westside Watch notes, “Recalls are a constitutional safeguard, not a political tactic.” They are extraordinarily difficult to achieve, particularly in large cities. They require volunteers, strict statutory compliance, financial transparency, and sustained civic engagement. They are expensive and demanding. Grassroots efforts do not arise casually. If leaders faithfully represent their constituents, recalls fail.

If recalls reach the ballot, dissatisfaction is neither trivial nor impulsive.

The Bailey recall effort reflected broader frustration among voters who believed their concerns were repeatedly dismissed. Many residents were troubled by reports that a competitor withdrew twice after citizens encouraged him to re-enter the race. Whether one agrees with that characterization or not, public trust eroded. As neighborhood leader Timothy Lewin observed, “Elected officials represent the interests of their constituents. When they no longer serve that purpose, they lose

the trust and faith of the people. It then becomes the duty of those citizens to demand new representation using peaceful and legal means." Recalls follow sustained discontent; they do not manufacture it.

Palmer Lake offers another example. Senator Gardner was involved in forming Protect Palmer Lake to advocate for the Buc-ee's annexation. Residents organized in response. Recall elections were decisive. A ballot initiative restoring power directly to the people passed by roughly 70 percent. That was not chaos. It was a community asserting its constitutional authority. Jacob Fenton of Palmer Lake for the People put it plainly: "Sovereignty rests with the governed."

Gardner and Williams are correct that recalls are serious. They are serious precisely because they are difficult. But seriousness does not justify confining them to criminal misconduct. Shawn Sawyer of Tri-Lakes Preservation reminds us, "They are an unfortunate, but sometimes necessary democratic safety valve if serious concerns arise."

The Constitution protects more than officeholders. It protects homeowners concerned about evacuation routes, taxpayers funding public bonds, and neighborhoods confronting growth decisions that shape daily life. It protects citizens who believe their voices are no longer meaningfully weighed.

When voters act — especially by wide margins — it is not an attempt to relitigate elections. It is an assertion that consent matters between elections. Recalls are the constitutional answer to the modern would-be monarchs — powerful special interests that fund their candidates into office who vote in their interests instead of the people they represent.