



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Calls for Bipartisan New Mexico Election Law Reform

SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today called for a bipartisan review of the New Mexico election code. "The voters of New Mexico need to be assured that their votes will be counted and that results can be tabulated in a timely manner. The first priority is creating uniform statewide standards for provisional ballots, in-lieu ballots and absentee ballots. Next, I want to see consistent and comprehensive training for all election officials and poll workers so that these standards are enforced and implemented. Third, there should be a paper trail for all machine votes cast. I will ask the legislative leadership of both parties to take up election reform in the 2005 session," Governor Richardson said.

As part of an overall reform package, I will recommend the following reforms:

- 1 Create uniformity in New Mexico's Election Code.
 - a. Conduct a full review of the New Mexico election code to eliminate inconsistencies and unclear statutes in the Election Code.
 - b. Standardize qualifying criteria for provisional and in-lieu of ballots so we can qualify and count these ballots uniformly, accurately and timely.
 - c. Standardize voting machines for all voters in all counties.

- 2 Streamline absentee voting.
 - a. Allow voters to turn in their absentee ballot at their precinct on election day, not just to the county clerk's office; or surrender their blank absentee ballot to their precinct on election day and vote at the polls.
 - b. Allow early processing of absentee ballots prior to election day so we can get timely results and begin the processing of provisional and in-lieu of ballots.

- 3 Provide a paper trail for voter registration and for voting.
 - a. Provide a carbon-copy receipt when you register to vote that does not transfer Social Security numbers.
 - b. Provide a confirmation email for online voter registration.
 - c. Ensure a verified paper trail for each vote cast.

- 4 Create strict regulations for presiding judges and poll workers.
 - a. Enhance mandatory training for presiding judges and precinct boards.
 - b. Require all presiding judges to be certified by the state.
 - c. Conduct a massive recruitment of new election judges and poll workers.

- 5 Modify standards for the number of machines and poll workers per hundred voters to prevent long lines at polling sites.

- 6 Provide clear instructions and materials to voters.
 - a. Improve ballot design and instructions to create more intuitive ballots that will help eliminate voter error. These improvements will lessen the occurrence of voters putting proof of identification in inner envelopes instead of outer absentee envelopes, or circling candidate choices instead of completing the arrow.

- 7 Closing: There are election laws on the books in New Mexico that need to be enforced, but there are other election laws that clearly need to be reformed. New Mexico should come into full compliance with the voter identification provisions required under the Help America Vote Act. The state should also examine networking every polling place directly to the Secretary of State's central system.

“Although there will be costs associated with these reforms, if we can develop a bipartisan consensus, it would definitely be money well spent to guarantee New Mexico voters a more efficient election process,” said Governor Richardson. “I will work with the Secretary of State and the Legislature to assess how these important reforms can be paid for.”