



## **New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson Signs Sweeping Election Reform Package**

**Comprehensive legislation addresses voter ID, creates uniform,  
statewide standards for provisional ballots & election worker training,  
allows early counting of absentee ballots**

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SANTA FE, NM- Governor Bill Richardson today signed a comprehensive election reform package incorporating several bills that initiate sweeping changes in New Mexico's election process. The new law creates uniform standards for voter identification, ballot counting, voting machine records, and the training of election judges and poll workers.

"This legislation will ensure the integrity of our elections," said Governor Richardson. "It will in no way discourage qualified people from voting, and most importantly, will make sure that every vote is counted."

The final version of the legislation is Senate Bill 678, sponsored by Senator Linda Lopez, which included elements of Senate bills 680, 718, and 735. The Governor's office worked closely with Secretary of State Rebecca Vigil-Giron, Attorney General Patricia Madrid, Speaker of the House Ben Lujan, Representative Ed Sandoval, the Chairman of the Voters and Election Committee, and Senator Lopez. The Governor also received a detailed set of analysis and recommendations from his Election Reform Task Force.

At today's signing, held in the Cabinet Room at the State Capitol, Governor Richardson outlined the provisions of the bill, joined by Attorney General Madrid, Secretary of State Vigil-Giron, Speaker Lujan, Representative Sandoval, Senator Lopez, and other advocates and grass roots supporters of the initiative.

**Voter ID-** Voters will be required to state their name and give the last four digits of their social security number, or show some form of physical identification prior to voting. The list of acceptable ID includes any photo ID, a utility bill, a bank statement, a government check or a paycheck. Any tribal government document is acceptable as well.

“Don’t listen to the critics who say this is “Voter I.D. ‘light’,” said Governor Richardson. “This voter ID provision is applied **universally** to *all* voters in *all* forms of voting- early, absentee, and in-person, and it is consistent with the federal “Help America Vote act.”

**Counting absentee ballots.** The legislation will help ensure election results are available in a more-timely manner. Vote counting often bogs down with absentee ballots. The bill will allow county clerks to count absentee ballots beginning up to five days prior to election day.

**Uniform standards for provisional ballots.** While we want timely results, those results must be accurate- New Mexicans deserve the correct totals. The law includes a uniform standard for provisional ballots, and funding for the appropriate training for all presiding judges and election workers, statewide, so those standards can be enforced.

**Standards for verifying totals.** The law mandates a verifiable and auditable paper trail on all voting machines. This will assist the validation process during any recount.

**A voter friendly process.** The bill also makes New Mexico more voter friendly by requiring maps to be posted at all polling places directing voters to their proper precincts. Voters will also be able to drop off absentee ballots at their polling location on election day, and will provide funding to re-design ballots and election materials to make them easier to understand and complete them correctly.

Speaker of the House Ben Lujan will chair an interim committee to tackle additional questions that must be addressed, such as same-day registration, prepaid postage for absentee ballots, and greater uniformity in voting machines.