



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

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### **Governor Richardson Signs Legislation to Ensure That Every Vote is Counted**

(Santa Fe, NM) -- Governor Bill Richardson today signed a key piece of legislation passed during the recently completed legislative session. Senate Bill 295, the New Mexico Make Every Vote Count Act, moves the state to a single paper ballot system, makes New Mexico's elections system more transparent and helps guarantee that every New Mexican's ballot will be counted.

"Today we are moving New Mexico from a hodge-podge of varied voting systems to one, simple, statewide, all paper-ballot system using optical scanners to count the vote – a system that provides uniform accountability and an absolute paper trail should there be any questions regarding the legitimacy of our vote," said Governor Richardson. "With this step we will guarantee fair and accurate elections, insure accessibility for voters who are disabled and restore faith in our electoral process."

This bill includes the input of legislators, concerned citizens and representatives from the state's disabled community. It builds upon the improvements that the Richardson Administration has already made to New Mexico's elections system. This includes improved training for poll workers, establishing statewide standards for provisional ballots, and simplified absentee voting. Penalties against state officials who violate the public trust have also been strengthened and tougher enforcement powers for the Secretary of State enacted.

"Paper ballots are the least expensive, most secure form of voting available," said Governor Richardson. "These paper ballots will be the ultimate back-up for our elections – and will provide us with the level of security that New Mexicans deserve."

Governor Richardson has appropriated \$11 million to fund this transition to paper ballots. Those monies, along with \$9 million from the federal government under the Help America Vote Act, will help fund this transition in counties across New Mexico.