

2020 PRIORITY LEGISLATION FOR COMMON CAUSE NEW MEXICO

1. Fully funding the Independent Ethics Commission. New Mexico voters deserve an ethical government that works for everyone. Over 75% of our state's voters supported the creation of an Independent Ethics Commission in the 2018 election. The newly appointed Commissioners have worked tirelessly to promulgate rules and regulations to carry out their established duties, and full funding will allow the Commission to function efficiently, meet statutory requirements, and fully carry out its responsibilities. New Mexico lawmakers need to listen to voters, and act to restore the public's trust in our political process. The LFC has rejected the lean budget that was presented to their committee, despite an LFC analyst fully supporting the recommendation. **Currently, the Executive Budget Recommendation for FY20 supplemental funding is \$385,000 and for FY21 is \$1,244,000.** The LFC Recommendation for FY20 supplemental is \$0, and for FY21, \$985,000. Proper funding from the start is critical to the important work required of this Commission. We've requested that the New Mexico State Legislature fully fund the Ethics Commission with the \$1.2 million that is necessary to pay for adequate staffing, resources, and office space.

2. Defending against legislation to call for an Article V Constitutional Convention. In 2017, New Mexico legislature passed HJR10 and rescinded all previous calls for a Constitutional Convention that it had made in 1951, 1965 and 1976. HJR 10 required the legislature to then notify Congress of its action. The New Mexico legislature took a **key** step away from this dangerous precipice and to safeguard our constitutional liberties and civil rights by rescinding prior calls for a convention and we need to stop legislation attempting to add New Mexico to this list again. Simply put, an Article V convention is a threat to all Americans' constitutional rights and civil liberties. Because there is no language in the U.S. Constitution to limit the scope of a convention, it is widely understood that a convention, once called, would be able to consider **any** amendments to the Constitution that the appointed delegates wish to consider. There are no guidelines, nor rules, to govern a constitutional convention. Due to the lack of provisions in the Constitution and no historical, or legal precedence, it is unknown how delegates to a convention would be appointed, what rules would be in place, what would happen in the case of legal disputes, what issues would be raised, how the American people would be represented, nor how to limit the influence of special interest lobbies for such a convention. Since there is no way to limit a convention's focus, any constitutional issue could be revised including the Peoples' right to free speech, our civil rights and civil liberties, our voting rights, privacy rights, and many others.

3. Supporting legislation to create a new task force that will study how to professionalize and modernize the New Mexico State Legislature. Currently, New Mexico is the only state in the country that does not pay its legislators a salary. Instead, New Mexico legislators are paid a daily per diem and mileage when they are working in their official capacity.

While this has traditionally been seen as a benefit to the development of state initiatives and law making here in the state, there are several issues inherent in this structure that has led to a disparity in our diversity and community representation in the legislature. For many working citizens of our state, it is financially prohibitive to run for a seat in our legislature, which may lead to an oversaturation of retired, affluent, and similarly situated elected officials, which is not representative of the majority of the citizens in our state. According to our annual polling, the vast majority of New Mexicans believe that our elected officials are more influenced by special interests and lobbyists, than by their constituents and community needs. Between limited resources, limited staff, and limited time, this means that some lawmakers, who also work other full-time jobs, not only need to lean on the expertise of industry lobbyists on many policy issues, but they can also face many potential conflicts of interest. Enabling our legislature to have paid staff to analyze legislation, it will also allow our elected officials take on larger roles in drafting our budget, as well as specific policy. Additionally, it will unburden our legislators of conflicts of interest that are inherent in our current system and allow them to focus on the important business of our state. The establishment of a new taskforce to study the multitude of factors that need to be updated to help modernize New Mexico's Legislature and is crucial to paving the way for the future of New Mexico.

4. Expand Ranked Choice Voting to include party primary elections to ensure the winning candidate represents the majority by Constitutional Amendment. The cities of Las Cruces and Santa Fe have implemented ranked choice voting, which automatically tabulates the voter's candidate preferences if no one receives a voting majority in the first round. The voting system saves money by avoiding a run-off and ensures that the winner is supported by a true majority. Common Cause is supporting a constitutional amendment to allow for this voting system to be used in other elections across the state, including party primaries. Not only did the municipalities of Las Cruces and Santa Fe see an increased voter turnout, but ranked choice voting also increased voter engagement throughout the electoral process. New Mexico voters have regularly nominated candidates in primary elections who have received well under 50% of the majority's approval. Expanding rank choice voting to party primary elections will ensure the candidate nominated truly represents the voice of the majority.

5. Update state public financing system to include all judicial races. Currently, our state's public financing system may only be used by candidates for our State Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Public Regulations Commission candidates. As the cost of judicial election campaigns continues to inflate, candidates are required to raise ever-increasing amounts of money which often makes the idea of running for office out of the question for many well-qualified candidates running for elected judicial positions. Candidates who do run are often obligated to raise campaign funds from individuals and corporations, but at the same time, ensure that they do not know exactly which donors contributed to their judicial campaigns, in order to protect them from potential conflicts of interest and to comply with judicial ethics. This continually puts members of our judiciary in the precarious position of raising money from donors and then turning a blind eye at fundraising events when donor checks are handed to their campaign treasurer. Expanding our public financing program to include district court judges is the best way to ensure our judges are protected from potential conflicts of interest and that they can focus their time on their court's case dockets, not raising large campaign funds to run their election. Additionally, without having a public financing option for **all** of our judicial district court races, our state's judiciary remains vulnerable to spending from outside special

interest groups who have been pouring money into judicial elections in states across the country to influence those races for their own benefit. It's time to protect our judiciary and allow judges the ability to use our state's public financing program.

Common Cause is a nonpartisan grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. It works to create an open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all; and to empower all people to make their voices heard as equals in the political process.

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