



Common Cause New Mexico Election Modernization Bill Priorities

We need your support to get some great election modernization bills passed in New Mexico! Common Cause New Mexico works with a **large coalition of New Mexico organizations on election protection and election modernization**. After some of the problems experienced in the last elections, our coalition of non-profit organizations want to ensure our voting system is free, fair, and accessible for all New Mexicans.

- ALL eligible voters should have a chance to have their voices heard.
- Long lines at the polls and limited access to registration solely through traditional paper-based registration systems along with arbitrary deadlines which are no longer necessary due to technological advances undermine our democratic process. There is no excuse for letting one more election come and go without bringing our voter registration system into the 21st century.
- The course is clear, and we need your help to make sure New Mexico modernizes our elections.

1. Allowing 17 year olds to Vote in Primaries and Pre registering of 16 and 17 year olds

- a. **Promotes Democracy for our Future.** Encouraging people of all ages to register to vote and participate in their government is crucial to the continued viability of our democracy and to ensuring a robust political debate. Particularly, we already trust young people to protect our democracy through military service –teaching them early about the pride and importance of civic participation is equally important.
- b. **Expands the Success of the Poll Worker Program.** During the 2012 election cycle, many 16 and 17 year olds worked at the polls, with positive results, including a greater understanding of and respect for the importance of the electoral system.
- c. **Improves Access.** The purpose of this bill is to encourage voter registration by providing convenient registration opportunities for qualified high school students. Hands-on experience doing civic education work in the schools has shown us that many high school students, once engaged, are excited to register, but are unable to, potentially losing them as voters. Studies show that voting is a behavior which, when encouraged, becomes a habit.
- d. If 18-year-old citizens in the United States registered at the same rate as the general U.S. population, an additional 830,000 18-year-old voters would have been eligible to vote in the 2008 election.
- e. The bill also allows **17 year olds to vote in the primary election** if they will be 18 by the general election of that that year; this is a growing trend nationally and New Mexico should take advantage of the trend.

2. Update voter registration online and allow for online registration

- a. **Modernizes our Election System for All New Mexicans:** The traditional voter registration update methods are increasingly out-of-step with 21st century advancements. This antiquated system – largely unchanged since the 19th century – requires forms that are distributed by front-line state agencies, completed and checked by hand, and then mailed or delivered to other government offices for verification and processing. While there will always be a need for paper registration

updates in certain instances, adding a paperless system will add a layer of access to voter registration updating for all New Mexicans.

- b. **Improves Access and Opportunity.** Paperless registration updating allows states to reach many under-registered populations, like college students who have regular access to internet and are culturally comfortable conducting business online. Online registration updating offers more access for voters, in addition to state offices and voter registration agencies.
- c. **Updating after Moving is a Critical Component many Voters Miss.** Many New Mexicans move each and every year – allowing people to update their information online for voter registrations ensures more eligible New Mexicans will be able to cast their ballot in elections.
- d. **Preserves Election Integrity.** We are making sure all the necessary safeguards are in the bill, and are working with experts in both voting and technology to ensure online registration updating is safe and secure.

3. Extend the Voter Registration Deadline

- a. **Modernizes our Election System.** Our election officials now have the technology to process voter registration forms in real time. This bill will allow eligible New Mexicans to register through the Saturday before Election Day.
- b. **Improves Access and Opportunity.** Twenty-eight states (including New Mexico) end voter registration 25 days or more before Election Day, well before debates are held, advertisements are run, and most voters focus on the election.
- c. **Promotes Democracy for our Future.** Democracy works best when the highest numbers of people possible participate in the process. Low voter turnout has been a problem in the United States, and registering though early voting is a very effective tool in terms of boosting voter turnout. In the 2006 elections, the average voter turnout in states which offer registration up to Election Day was 11% higher than in states without extended voter registration.
- d. Allowing registration through the Saturday before Election Day helps populations who have traditionally been disenfranchised from the voting process. The elderly and disabled often find it difficult to make an extra trip to the County Clerk's office, or to connect with a third party VRA to register to vote.
- e. **Growing Trend.** 10 states plus the District of Columbia currently offer, or have enacted laws, which provide for, Election Day registration, allowing eligible citizens to register or update their records on Election Day. Two other states, as well as D.C., offer what New Mexico is proposing – qualified voter allowed to register and vote through the Saturday before the election.

For more information about Common Cause New Mexico 2013 legislative priorities, please visit our website at www.commoncause.org/nm or call our office in Albuquerque at 505.323.6399.

Common Cause New Mexico is dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest and accountable government that serves the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard in the political process.