

Priority legislation for Common Cause New Mexico (CCNM) in 2015

1. Our proposed **disclosure legislation** has passed the Senate three times (last two unanimously), as well as all House committees in prior years. This bill will overhaul the current law to bring it in line with both recent constitutional rulings and modern campaign practices by :
 - Requiring public disclosure of information about the campaign spending of PACs and other non-candidate campaign participants without crossing constitutional boundaries established by the courts
 - Requiring independent groups to disclose contributions and expenditures as candidates and political parties do now

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

- 92% of New Mexico voters support requiring that all large political contributions from individuals, corporations, PACs, non-profits or unions be made public
 - 63% of New Mexico voters support contribution limits for candidates
2. New Mexico is *one of only nine states* without an **ethics commission**. Our proposed bill will amend the constitution to create an **Independent State Ethics Commission** to:
 - oversee the conduct of state officers and employees, campaign finance reporting, government contractors and lobbyists
 - Serve as a resource for officials to get guidance on issues, provide ethics training and create best practices for all parties covered.

The vast majority of elected officials in New Mexico are hard-working, ethical people who want the *best* for our state. **Creating an independent ethics commission is a simple way to build voters' trust in their government.**

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

- 64% of voters think elected officials are more responsive to lobbyists than voters
 - 79% of voters believe corruption in New Mexico politics is a problem
3. **Online voter registration** (NOT online voting) modernizes our election system as the traditional voter registration methods are increasingly out-of-date with new technology. Secretary of State Dianna Duran, as well as numerous non-profit organizations, supports online voter registration.

Online registration will:

- improve the public's access
- alleviates the burden for state employees (who currently have to type in each hand written form they receive)
- Saves the State Of New Mexico untold dollars in staff time
- Allows for "cleaner" voter rolls

4. Fixing New Mexico's existing system of **public campaign financing**. New Mexico currently has three systems for public financing of campaigns: the Public Regulation Commission, Court of Appeals and the NM Supreme Court. On June 27, 2011, the **U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed the constitutionality of public campaign financing** in the *Arizona Free Enterprise v. Bennett* decision. The ruling, however, struck down one mechanism used in some public financing programs, including New Mexico's Voter Action Act.

Our proposed changes:

- Allow publicly financed candidates to accept small contributions of \$100 or less. These \$100-or-less contributions would be matched with additional public funds on a 4-1 basis, thus the publicly financed candidate could continue to effectively compete with a privately financed opponent.
- Candidates who run unopposed will not receive any public funding.
- Prohibits the use of campaign funds for living expenses or compensation to the candidate or candidate's family.

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

- 61% of registered voters support changes to allow matching funds
- 76% of registered voters support changing the law to stop funding unopposed candidates

5. **Update the Lobbyist Regulation Act** to require better disclosure. New Mexico is currently behind many other states in its requirement of disclosure of lobbyist activities. In New Mexico lobbyists are only required to register and file expenditure and contribution reports – but often these are indecipherable or non-existent, and purged after only a few years. Alarming recent data shows a 6:1 ratio of lobbyists to each state legislator.

To update the Lobbyist Regulation Act, we should:

- upgrade the Secretary of State's lobbyist website
- publish reports more expeditiously and in an easily searchable and downloadable fashion
- Increase lobbyist registration fees
- Require lobbyists to report on the legislators they meet with and which issues are discussed in such meetings

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

- 89% of registered voters support requiring that lobbyists disclose the issue they are hired to work on

6. New Mexico should improve public confidence in the integrity of our state government by enacting a **two-year waiting period before former elected officials can become lobbyists**.

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

Approximately 13 former senators and 13 former representatives currently lobby the legislature. These lobbyists' established relationships with former colleagues combined with their experience and knowledge of the process makes them more influential than the average constituent or citizen lobbyist. Acknowledging these unfair advantages, **the federal government and 28 other states already provide for a hiatus or a pause between the time a senator or representative leaves the legislature and when they are allowed to lobby former their colleague.**

7. Common Cause New Mexico supports the creation an **independent commission to conduct redistricting**. This will establish written criteria for re-drawing district boundaries **and require a fair and transparent process** for conducting redistricting. The drawing of electoral districts is not transparent and all too often, there is no public

participation. The resulting districts can often serve the political interests of the people who draw them, rather than the interests of the people being represented.

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

When voters feel that their input doesn't matter, they stop participating. Seeing incumbents win time and again because districts are rigged to stifle competition creates a sense of incumbent inevitability and creates a disconnection between citizens and their elected officials. This combination of disenfranchisement and low voter participation is toxic to our democracy. It permits big money campaign donors and special interests to dominate our government. In addition, unfair districting has historically had a disproportionately negative impact on minority citizens.

8. **Open Primaries for Independent Voters.** This is a critical initiative as the number of voters registered as decline-to-state ("DTS") or Independent has tripled since 1982, from 7% of total registered voters to nearly 22% of total registered voters. Even more telling is the party affiliation of younger voters – more voters aged 18 to 24 are registered as a DTS or Independent than with either major party in New Mexico, a clear signal that younger voters are turned off by partisan politics.

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

Every vote should count in New Mexico, and by excluding such a large number of registered voters, we are denying them the right to participate in our democracy. New Mexicans are tired of partisan gridlock in Congress and in Santa Fe, and that is demonstrated most clearly by the rise in the number of voters who do not join one of the two major parties. Opening the primary election to all registered voters can help combat the apathy many people feel and hopefully help move towards engaging them in the public debate surrounding issues that are important to our citizens.

9. We should **extend the Voter Registration Deadline** by allowing registration through the Saturday before Election Day. Democracy works best when the highest numbers of people possible participate in the process. Low voter turnout has been a problem in New Mexico, and registering through early voting is a very effective tool in terms of boosting voter turnout.

Why this legislation is important to New Mexicans:

Ten 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. **Our election officials currently have the technology to process voter registration forms in real time** thus allowing registration through the Saturday before Election Day.

10. Allowing **17 year olds to Vote in Primaries and Pre-registering of 16 and 17 year olds**, 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.

The purpose of this bill is to:

- Encourage voter registration by providing convenient registration opportunities for qualified high school students.
- Allow 17 year olds to vote in the primary election if they will be 18 by the general election of that that year

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.

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