



New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force Encourages Legislators to Continue its Guidelines and Recommendations from the Citizen Redistricting Committee

For Release November 8, 2021

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Albuquerque, NM - Members of the New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force, a nonpartisan group of New Mexico residents who provided guidelines that resulted in formation of the Citizen Redistricting Committee, is encouraging legislators to follow the items originally outlined in its recommendations earlier this year. In addition, the group outlines the following items as a reflection of the Task Force's intent:

- During the special session on redistricting all legislative meetings should follow the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings Act, the "Sunshine Law."
- The legislators are urged to select the map presented by the Citizen Redistricting Committee that best balances compliance with the Voting Rights Act, is free from partisan gerrymandering, protects communities of interest and does not favor incumbents. If the Legislature amends the redistricting plans sent to them by the CRC, they are urged to provide a detailed explanation of why they amended the maps.
- Any decisions reflect the intent that constituents should choose their representatives and not representatives choosing their constituents.

"We are encouraged that many of the items recommended by the task force were adopted into law by the New Mexico legislature during the previous regular legislative session," says Judge Roderick Kennedy, former Chief Judge of the New Mexico Court of Appeals and co-chairman of the Task Force. "Our nonpartisan team recommended that an advisory board be established to develop maps for the legislature to minimize the partisan self-interest that disenfranchises voters through gerrymandering. We also recommended that party registration and partisan data not be used to develop maps that are presented to the legislature and that nationally recognized best practices guide the creation of elected districts."

In all, the group agreed on 18 recommendations that were considered during the formation of what would become the Citizen Redistricting Committee and result in development of the

maps that are being considered by the New Mexico Legislature in a still-to-be-announced special legislative session.

Other recommendations include:

- Maintaining communities of interest, ensuring cultural diversity; <https://www.redistrictnm.org>
- Satisfying the Voting Rights Act, preserving communities of interest, and representing compactness;
- Ensuring that Legislative and Public Education Commission district maps do not exceed justified population deviations and that Congressional district maps should be as close to equal population as practicable based on information from the most recent federal decennial census data generated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Also, the volunteer task force recommended that the Citizen Redistricting Committee and elected leaders avoid splitting communities of interest, which are defined as contiguous populations that share common economic, social or cultural interests. In addition, when feasible, the task force recommended that decision makers minimize the fragmentation of governmental subdivisions such as cities, counties, or tribes.

"We are encouraged that the Citizen Redistricting Committee Chair Justice Ed Chavez included two sessions of public input allowing numerous in-person hearings statewide, virtual attendance and the ability for New Mexico residents to provide comments using an interactive online portal," says Maureen Skowran, data analyst at UNM's Geospatial and Population Studies, one of the task force members. "The committee's efforts resulted in diverse input through two formal sets of 16 total public hearings attended by residents throughout New Mexico and Tribal lands."

"The Citizen Redistricting Committee adopted the task force recommendations to conduct hearings and discussions in accordance with the principles of the New Mexico Open Meetings Act," says Richard Mason, League of Women Voters New Mexico, one of the task force members. "The CRC implemented the task force recommendations by announcing meetings in advance through an interactive website and proactive media outreach. The State Ethics Commission really stepped up to ensure the CRC was successful in their adoption of the task force recommendations and funding."

The New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force is pleased that the Citizen Redistricting Committee followed its recommendations and encourages the New Mexico Legislators to adopt their recommendations.

About RedistrictNM

RedistrictNM.com is built on the recommendations of the cross-partisan New Mexico Redistricting Task Force, convened by the nonpartisan organization, New Mexico First.

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