



Office of the Governor

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STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor, Secretary of State announce plan to protect right to vote, expand ballot access

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver on Thursday announced a proposal that will protect and expand New Mexico voting rights, including by expanding online voter registration, providing further protections for Native voters, and creating a permanent, voluntary absentee ballot request list.

Amid a wave of anti-democratic sentiment nationwide that includes the implementation of restrictive and discriminatory ballot access policies in other states, as well as a partisan refusal to fortify voting rights at the federal level, the proposed legislation will significantly expand ballot access and support voter rights in New Mexico while modernizing and further securing the state's elections. This initiative will be one of the governor's signature 2022 legislative agenda items.

"Protecting voting rights is essential to upholding our democracy and ensuring New Mexicans' voices are heard," said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. "On this somber anniversary of the January 6 Capitol insurrection, an anti-democratic attempt to overturn a free and fair election, we are reminded that it is more important than ever to safeguard access to the ballot box. While voting rights are under attack across the country, New Mexico is taking every action to protect and expand them."

"Even as we've seen attempts around the country to make voting more difficult for eligible voters, here in New Mexico we continue to be a leader in how to balance the demands for voter access with the needs of maintaining our high levels of election security," said **Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver**. "This legislation now gives us the chance to pass one of the most powerful voting rights bills in our state's history. Governor Lujan Grisham shares my dedication to providing New Mexicans with the best and most secure elections in the nation and I know

that the policies we are pursuing during the 2022 legislative session will ensure that all New Mexicans have the opportunity to safely and efficiently make their voices heard.”

The proposal includes:

- Increasing voter access by extending the early voting period through the Sunday before Election Day, designating Election Day as a state holiday, and allowing 16 year-olds to participate in local elections;
- Creating a permanent absentee voter list that allows individuals to voluntarily receive mail ballots for each election without needing to make individual requests;
- Expanding online voter registration opportunities by allowing individuals without MVD-issued ID to register online using their full social security number;
- Extending the timeline for mailing ballots to voters to 35 days before an election and extending the deadline for accepting voted ballots to 7 p.m. the Friday after an election to accommodate for mail delivery time;
- Supporting Native voting access by expanding the timeline for indigenous nations, tribes, and pueblos to request alternate voting sites;
- Improving automatic voter registration by adopting a system that provides a mechanism for eligible individuals to become automatically registered to vote upon completing a transaction at the Motor Vehicle Department;
- Enabling nominating petition signatures to be securely submitted electronically;
- Automatically restoring the voting rights of those convicted of a felony who are not currently incarcerated; and
- Creating an option to vote a straight party ballot.

Gov. Lujan Grisham and Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver previously successfully worked with the Legislature to expand voting access to eligible New Mexicans by enacting same-day voter registration and expanding automatic voter registration, in addition to delivering a measure in 2020 for the protection of secure and expeditious conduct of absentee voting during the first election to take place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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