



Support for SB 224, Register Voters Three Days Before Elections
House Local Government, Elections, Land Grants & Cultural Affairs Committee
March 9, 2017

On behalf of Project Vote, Common Cause New Mexico, Native American Voters Alliance, Fair Elections Legal Network, the Center for Civic Policy, Planned Parenthood Rocky Mountains, League of Women Voters New Mexico, New Mexico Asian Family Center, NEA-NM, and Strong Families New Mexico, we urge you to support SB 224. Extending the registration deadline to three days before the election will allow for same-day registration during early voting, which will improve election administration and participation.

Under current law, citizens must register to vote nearly a full month before an election. Sixteen states plus the District of Columbia have adopted same-day registration during early voting, on Election Day, or both.¹ While technology continually makes same-day registration even easier to administer, three of these states have successfully offered same-day registration for more than 40 years.² Same-day registration is a proven method for increasing voter participation, as average turnout is significantly higher than in states without this reform.³

Allowing more voters the opportunity to correct their address over longer period of time will increase the accuracy of the voter rolls. Further, there is no reason in our modern age to disenfranchise citizens simply because they have moved. Voters with low incomes, young voters, and voters of color are more

¹ California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii (implementation in 2018), Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland (during early voting), Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina (during early voting, in place due to court ruling), Vermont, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

² Maine adopted in 1973; Minnesota adopted in 1974; Wisconsin adopted in 1975.

³ See e.g., Estelle Rogers, *Same Day Registration: What Is it? Where is it available?* Project Vote (2015), <http://www.projectvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SameDayFactSheet-PV-Feb2015.pdf>.

likely to move frequently. Same-day registration helps these traditionally underrepresented communities by providing an opportunity to update addresses and vote during a single trip.

Same-day registration also reduces the number of provisional ballots cast, which improves election administration and saves money. Provisional ballots are cast when voters discover they did not properly register or there was an administrative error. Provisional ballots require additional time and resources both at the polling place and after Election Day. North Carolina first offered same-day registration during early voting in 2008 and saw 23,000 fewer provisional ballots than in 2004.⁴

Moreover, arbitrary registration deadlines cut off registration just when information about—and interest in—an election reaches its peak. A recent study of Internet queries confirmed that many Americans sought voter registration information after the deadline.⁵ Many people, especially first-time voters, may not fully understand election procedures and deadlines.

Reducing the gap between the close of registration and the election is one of the most impactful voting reforms available. This bill will help ensure that all eligible New Mexicans can make their voices heard in the political process. We encourage swift passage of this bill. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Marissa Liebling, Legislative Director Project Vote
202.556.5651; mliebling@projectvote.org

Viki Harrison, Executive Director Common Cause NM
505.205.3750; vharrison@commoncause.org

Jon Sherman, Senior Counsel Fair Elections Legal Network

Laurie Weakee, Executive Director Native American Voters Alliance

Marshall Martinez, Public Affairs Director Planned Parenthood Rocky Mountains

Meredith Machen, President league of Women Voters New Mexico

Oriana Sandoval, Executive Director Center for Civic Policy

Huong D. Nguyen, Outreach & Policy Specialist New Mexico Asian Family Center

Charles Goodmacher, Government and Media Relations NEA NM

Jessica Lopez Collins, Program Director, Strong Families New Mexico

⁴ *Id.* at 2.

⁵ Alex Street et al., *Estimating Voter Registration Deadline Effects with Web Search Data*, 23 POL. ANALYSIS 225 (2015), available at <https://academic.oup.com/pan/article/23/2/225/1488833/Estimating-Voter-Registration-Deadline-Effects>.