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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2026

Bill Number	<u>SJR1</u>	Sponsor	<u>Trujillo</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.232720.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SRC/SEC</u>
Short Title	<u>School Election Timing, CA</u>		
Analyst	<u>Montoya</u>	Original Date	<u>1/25/2026</u>
		Last Updated	<u>1/26/2026</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Resolution 1 (SJR1) would, with voter approval, amend the New Mexico Constitution to strike the requirement for school elections to be held at different times from partisan elections.

As this is a constitutional amendment, its adoption would be subject to voter approval at the next general election—scheduled for November 2026—or at any special election prior to that date that may be called for that purpose.

FISCAL IMPACT

SJR1 does not contain an appropriation.

According to analysis from the Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) of a Joint Resolution introduced during the 2025 legislative session (Senate Joint Resolution 11) that proposed the same changes, SJR1 may result in more districts placing bond and mill levy questions on partisan election ballots, potentially increasing local revenue for capital outlay and matching funds for Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC) awards. In turn, this could potentially increase the number of applications for funding through PSCOC. If these bonds are passed, districts may qualify for a reduction in their local match requirement for PSCOC projects, thus increasing the state's financial contribution. However, estimating the exact increase in state funding is difficult, as it depends on factors such as the number of districts holding elections, the success of those elections, the availability of waivers, and each school district's financial resources and project scale.

According to analysis from the Secretary of State's Office (SOS), state law requires the SOS to publish the ballot question in both English and Spanish once a week for four weeks in at least one newspaper per county, with costs varying based on length. In 2024, publishing four ballot questions cost approximately \$141 thousand. The SOS also produces a voter guide for polling locations, which cost about \$52 thousand in 2024. Additional amendments could increase ballot

length, raise printing costs, and potentially extend voting times, requiring more ballot printing systems to ensure efficiency.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Potential Impacts on Elections. SJR1 could potentially increase voter participation in school board elections if they were held alongside partisan elections. In 2025, [approximately 25 percent](#) of registered voters in New Mexico participated in local elections, a rise of approximately 100 thousand voters compared with [2023](#). New Mexico has seen a significant increase in local election voter turnout since 2019. County clerks attributed this increase to the enactment of Laws 2018, Chapter 79, which consolidated local elections, including school board and municipal races into a single election day in November of odd-numbered years.

SJR1 may also result in more diverse electorate, which could contribute to more representative election outcomes by incorporating a wider range of perspectives, compared with those driven by a smaller group of voters. According to [the National Civic League](#), a nonpartisan organization promoting civic engagement, local governance, and democratic innovation, a higher turnout improves community engagement in areas like education, housing, and transportation. However, consolidation may also introduce partisan dynamics into school board races, potentially shifting priorities.

Expenses for School Districts. In New Mexico, school districts are responsible for covering the costs of special elections they request, including expenses for ballot printing, mailing, staffing, and other administrative needs. These elections are conducted under the [Special Election Act \(Section 1-24-5\(A\) NMSA 1978\)](#). County clerks typically administer these elections. However, the financial responsibility would lie with the requesting school district.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

County clerks are responsible for administering special elections, which require significant resources. According to SOS analysis, SJR1 could reduce the need for special elections, allowing clerks to allocate resources more efficiently. This would provide additional capacity for statewide election planning, training, and preparation during non-election periods.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico Regional Cooperatives (NMRECA)
- Secretary of State (SOS)

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