

TO:

Members of the New Mexico House Appropriations Committee

FROM:

Institute for Responsive Government Action, Issue One, Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ), Protect Democracy, Public Rights Project, Vote Vets

SUBJECT:

Full Funding for the Secretary of State's Office at \$12.9 Million

DATE:

February 7, 2025

Dear Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

We urge you to fully fund the New Mexico Secretary of State's budget request at \$12.9 million. We appreciate the past work the Legislature has taken, along with the Secretary of State, to make New Mexico a leader in the effective administration of elections. Reducing this budget to \$8.8 million would jeopardize the integrity of New Mexico's elections and place an unsustainable burden on local communities.

Maintaining full funding at current levels is critical to continuing New Mexico's election excellence. Earlier this year, the state was ranked number one in the nation for election administration by the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, moving up eight spots since the 2018 Elections Performance Index.¹ Past investments by the state legislature have ensured smooth elections, high voter confidence, and reliable systems. Cutting funding risks undoing this progress and could compromise election security and accessibility.

New Mexico Already Spends Less on Elections Than Peer States. New Mexico's election budget is modest compared to similar states. New Mexico ranks 40th in election spending per registered voter, placing it just behind Alabama.² The state spends just \$4.90 per voter, far less than neighboring states with analogous election systems.³ Further budget cuts will force counties to cover election costs, leaving local clerks struggling to secure funding. This degrades the quality

¹ Available at

https://www.sos.nm.gov/2024/03/25/new-mexicos-elections-ranked-number-one-in-nation/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

² Mohr, Zachary, Martha Kropf, Mary Jo McGowan, and JoEllen Pope. *A Republic If You Can Afford It: How Much Does it Cost to Administer Elections?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/republic-if-you-can-afford-it/CE8A01003AA98C51937031E4C1DC413E>

³ Arizona spends \$9.20, Colorado spends \$12.50, Kansas spends \$11.80, and Texas spends \$6.60. *Id.*

of elections across the board and creates a lopsided system in which a voter's access to the ballot depends on their zip code.

The Legislature Should Fully Fund the \$12.9 Million Request. Elections are a fundamental function of government. Ensuring fair, secure, and accessible elections should be a priority for the legislature. The full \$12.9 million request is necessary to maintain the state's strong track record, provide adequate staffing, and support county clerks in their essential work. Cutting the budget to \$8.8 million would put undue strain on local governments and weaken the election system.

We urge you to prioritize democracy by fully funding the Secretary of State's request. This investment ensures elections remain secure, fair, and well-administered across the entire state.

Signed,

The Institute for Responsive Government Action

Issue One

Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ)

Protect Democracy

Public Rights Project (PRP)

Vote Vets