

# 2025 ELECTION COSTS PROGRAM EVALUATION

## Responses & Recommendations

Presented by the Office of the Secretary of State

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STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
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# EVALUATION PROCESS CONCERNS

- Evaluation occurred during a packed legislative session with no election taking place
- Little consultation with election administration experts
- Conclusions drawn before a full Election Fund cycle was complete
- New Mexico elections deserve deeper analysis and respect for complexity

The research studying election costs is incredibly complex even for the nation's foremost researchers. For an example of the complexities involved in researching and comparing election costs across states, see *The Cost of Conducting Elections* by Charles Stewart III of MIT's Election Data + Science Lab: <https://electionlab.mit.edu/sites/default/files/2022-05/TheCostofConductingElections-2022.pdf>



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# NM NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ELECTIONS

- NM ranked #1 in election administration (MIT, 2024)
- Key Policies Driving Success:
  - Online voter registration
  - Automatic voter registration + Same-day registration
  - Expanded absentee and early voting
  - Tribal and rural outreach innovations
  - 100% paper ballots, post-election audits, ballot tracking
- High trust, relatively high turnout, low-cost elections
- NM ranks 40th in election spending per voter



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# SOS CONCERNS WITH LFC RECS

## Misguided Assumptions on Procurement

- Contract amounts aligned with RFPs ≠ lack of negotiation
- State Purchasing Division was fully involved
- Limited vendor pool due to certification requirements
- BAFO removed to streamline procurement—based on expert advice

## Limited Vendor Market Is Reality

- Support goal of more vendor engagement
- But certified election vendors are few by design (security + compliance)
- Procurement law limits flexibility in RFP drafting
- We'll continue to explore improvements with State Purchasing

SOS has additional concerns about the report's characterization of obligating future Legislatures to cover election costs. In 2024, our office requested an initial infusion of money for the Election Fund that LFC opposed. The bill that included the Election Fund money, SB 108, was amended without SOS input and resulted in the fund's negative cash balance.



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# SOS CONCERNS WITH LFC RECS (Cont.)

## Contingency Supplies: Complex but Important

- Counties already maintain emergency stock
- Regional pooling is logistically difficult, costly, and risks security chain-of-custody
- Open to discussion on how to implement without adding unnecessary burdens

## Voting Convenience Centers (VCCs)

- One-size-fits-all ratio is inappropriate
- NM's population is geographically diverse (rural, tribal, etc.)
- VCC numbers driven by population growth (Census)
- Counties need flexibility to meet local needs



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# SOS CONCERNS WITH LFC RECS (Cont.)

## Poll Worker Staffing

- Staffing varies by turnout, facility layout, and accessibility requirements
- Minimums exist, but many counties need more to serve voters effectively
- We're developing tools to track and optimize staffing – need funding and systems

## Central Data Repository

- Support goal of transparency and standardization
- SOS requested EMS upgrade in FY26 – partially funded
- Will seek full funding in FY27 for statewide implementation
- Requires system design, standardization, long-term support

## County-Level Data & Accountability

- Already collect and report detailed data (EAC, MIT, grant reporting)
- Accountability in Government Act not designed for elected offices
- Open to working with DFA and LFC on appropriate sharing frameworks



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# SOS RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Fully Fund Election Management System**
  - EMS supports ballot creation, registration, reporting, certification
- **Fund Cybersecurity Migration**
  - Transition to DoIT environment is urgent and overdue
- **Fund Voter Outreach & Education**
  - Outreach is essential to participation and trust
- **Recognize Small Agency Realities**
  - SOS is small and lean—every staff position is essential
- **Fund Statewide Clerk Training**
  - Report criticizes inconsistent training, yet Legislature rejected solution



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# THANK YOU

- Many LFC suggestions reflect work we're already doing
- Oversight is valuable – but must be rooted in facts and expertise
- Elections are not just a cost center, they are the foundation of democracy
- Let's invest smartly, not cheaply
- We invite LFC and Legislature to partner with us
- Support expert-led, data-driven election systems
- Resist the urge to impose top-down metrics without context
- Let's protect and strengthen New Mexico's national leadership in elections



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