



# Election Financing

The Secretary of State (SOS) oversees and administers elections and election and campaign finance law and supports the local governments that hold them. The office also oversees funds dedicated to elections, including the statewide election fund, which finances all elections and the public election fund, which provides public funds for campaigns.

## Statewide and Local Elections

New Mexico holds primary and general elections for statewide executive officers, state judges, legislators, and bond and other statewide questions in even-numbered years. New Mexico primary elections are “semi-open” and allow voting by both voters who stated a party affiliation during registration and those who declined to state. Unaffiliated voters choose the party primary in which they want to vote.

Since adoption of amendments to the Local Election Act in 2018, New Mexico in November of odd-numbered years, holds a statewide, consolidated “regular local election” for county governments, school districts and community colleges, other local boards and questions, and certain municipal governments. Municipalities can opt into the consolidated election or continued to hold elections on the statutory municipal election day in March.

## Funding

Although local governments were initially required to pay an annual assessments into the election fund to cover the costs of the regular local election, the assessment was eliminated a year after its creation, the fund was left with no recurring funding source, and costs shifted to the state. The amendment that eliminated the assessment also changed the way SOS allocated election funds to counties from post-election reimbursements to pre-election grants based on expected eligible expenses. Counties also have 45 days after an election to request reimbursement for any additional eligible costs beyond the grant award.

Until FY26, SOS paid for elections through its operating budget, with the agency budget fluctuating significantly year to year depending on whether the state was holding one election or two. A new funding stream for the election fund was created in 2024, and election costs were shifted to that fund to reduce the destabilizing impact of elections on the agency’s operating budget. Some annual election costs, such as yearly subscriptions, have since shifted back to the operating budget.

## Costs

On average, elections—whether a primary, general, or regular local—cost the state directly or through payments to counties about \$15 million a year, with the statewide general election costing a little more than the primary. The largest direct election expenditure are the ballot-on-demand systems, which allow voters to vote from any location and roughly make up 44 percent of total election costs.

State allocations to local governments have risen steadily each year since FY18. Payments from SOS to counties rose from \$3,700 in FY18 to \$11.7 million in FY24. Because the state contracts with vendors to lease ballot and voter registration systems for use statewide, counties’ expenses are primarily for personnel. According to statute, each polling station during election day and early voting must consist of three election judges and additional election clerks as needed. For early voting, the county sets the poll workers’ salaries, but on election day, poll workers must receive between the federal minimum wage and \$400 per day for each election day.

For the 2024 primary election, SOS allocated approximately \$4.9 million directly to counties for election administration and operations. The largest amount was \$2.3 million for Bernalillo County, followed by \$650 thousand each for Sandoval and Santa Fe. On the lower end, many counties—Cibola, Harding, Luna, Mora, Roosevelt, Sierra, Union, De Baca, Hidalgo, Quay—received between \$18 thousand and \$30 thousand.

### For More Information:

- An LFC program evaluation on election costs is available [here](#).
- The [Election Code](#) is Chapter 1 of state statute. The [Local Election Act](#) is Article 22 of Chapter 1.
- The Secretary of State provides election information [here](#).