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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 12

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

Christine Chandler

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF ALL-MAIL ELECTIONS FOR NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, since its founding, the United States has been guided by the democratic principle of a government of the people, by the people and for the people; and

WHEREAS, the United States is a representative democracy where not only does every vote count, but every vote matters; and

WHEREAS, the fundamental right to vote is the ability to hold elected representatives accountable; and

WHEREAS, yet only about fifty-eight percent of eligible Americans voted in the 2016 presidential election, according to the United States election project; and

WHEREAS, local governments looking for ways to increase

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1 voter participation are considering changes such as conducting
2 elections by mail; and

3 WHEREAS, at least twenty-two states have provisions
4 allowing certain elections to be conducted entirely by mail;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, as of January 2017, three of those twenty-two
7 states – Oregon, Washington and Colorado – held all elections
8 entirely by mail; and

9 WHEREAS, other states permit all-mail elections in certain
10 circumstances, such as for special districts, municipal
11 elections or when candidates are unopposed; and

12 WHEREAS, New Mexico requires local governments to hold all
13 special elections for bonds or other tax proposals by mail; and

14 WHEREAS, a study published in 2017 by the United States
15 election assistance commission found that voting by mail
16 increased turnout in local special elections by an average of
17 seven and six-tenths percent; and

18 WHEREAS, getting off of work when polls are open or
19 getting to a polling place for people living in very rural
20 areas of New Mexico are barriers to voting that can be remedied
21 by all-mail elections; and

22 WHEREAS, possible advantages of all-mail elections include
23 voter convenience and satisfaction, financial savings,
24 increased turnout and improvement of election reliability; and

25 WHEREAS, possible drawbacks of all-mail elections include

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1 lost ballots, heightened concerns about voter fraud, loss of
2 the level of voter confidence inherent in polling place voting
3 and reliance on the United States postal service; and

4 WHEREAS, voters must believe that the process is
5 transparent, accessible and accurate for all-mail elections to
6 be successful; and

7 WHEREAS, a study of the costs and benefits of all-mail
8 elections would provide valuable information about possible
9 direct cost savings, voter participation, the possibility of
10 voter fraud and cost savings from eliminating staff at polling
11 places on election days; and

12 WHEREAS, the effects of all-mail elections on New Mexico's
13 Native American population would need to be considered;

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
15 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the secretary of state be requested to
16 study the feasibility of all-mail elections for New Mexico; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a cost-benefit analysis be
18 made to consider the pros and cons of holding all-mail
19 elections; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that states that have successfully
21 implemented all-mail elections be studied as possible models
22 for implementation in New Mexico; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that effects of all-mail elections
24 on New Mexico's Native American population be addressed in the
25 study; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of state be
2 requested to report findings and recommendations to the
3 appropriate interim legislative committee by December 1, 2019;
4 and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
6 transmitted to the secretary of state.