

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website (www.nmlegis.gov). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>SJR11</u>	Sponsor	<u>Trujillo/Armstrong/Gallegos</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.230380.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SRC/SEC;HGEIC/HJC</u>
Short Title	<u>School Election Timing, CA</u>		
Analyst	<u>Montoya</u>	Original Date	<u>2/19/2025</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Resolution 11 (SJR11) would amend the Constitution of New Mexico to strike the requirement for school elections to be held at different times from partisan elections.

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

FISCAL IMPACT

SJR11 does not contain an appropriation.

According to the Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA), SJR11 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. Please see the [presentation](#) LESC staff provided during the 2024 interim for additional detail on the methods school districts use to generate funding for projects. In turn, this may 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 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. SJR11 could potentially increase voter participation in school board elections if they were held alongside partisan elections. In 2023, [approximately 20 percent](#) of registered voters in New Mexico participated in local elections, a rise of approximately 5,000 voters compared with 2021. According to Source New Mexico, 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.

SJR11 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 district.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

County clerks are responsible for administering special elections, which require significant resources. According to SOS analysis, SJR11 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 School Facilities Authority (PSFA)
- New Mexico Regional Cooperatives (NMRECA)
- Secretary of State (SOS)

MAM/nd/mca/jkh