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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>McQueen</u>	LAST UPDATED <u>2/17/2025</u>	ORIGINAL DATE <u>1/24/2025</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Session Length, Subjects & Overrides, CA</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>House Joint Resolution 1/aHJC</u>	ANALYST <u>Hanika-Ortiz</u>

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Election Costs	No fiscal impact	\$35.0 to \$50.0	No fiscal impact	\$35.0 to \$50.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund
LCS	No fiscal impact	Indeterminate but minimal	Indeterminate but minimal		Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
 New Mexico Attorney General (NMAG)
 Secretary of State (SOS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of HJC Amendment to HJR1

The House Judiciary Committee Amendment to House Joint Resolution 1 clarifies that annual legislative session lengths will be determined by dividing the current number of days for each legislative biennium equally, not to exceed 45 days each. The resulting legislative sessions of equal length would also convene the second Tuesday of January, instead of the third Tuesday.

Synopsis of House Joint Resolution 1

House Joint Resolution 1 (HJR1) proposes an amendment to Article IV, Section 5, of the Constitution of New Mexico to provide that each regular session of the Legislature shall not exceed 45 days in length, removes the restrictions on bills that may be considered in even-numbered years, and provides for consideration of veto overrides for bills of a previous regular, special, or extraordinary legislative session within the same legislative biennium. If ratified by voters, the amendment would become part of the New Mexico Constitution.

The joint resolution provides that the amendment be submitted to voters for approval at the next general election (November 2026) or at a special election called for the purpose of considering the amendment. The amendment becomes effective if approved by a majority of voters.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Under Section 1-16-4 NMSA 1978 and the New Mexico Constitution, SOS must print samples of the text of each constitutional amendment in Spanish and English in an amount equal to 10 percent of registered voters in the state. SOS must also publish the samples once a week for four weeks before the election in newspapers in every county in the state. Further, the number of constitutional amendments on the ballot may impact the ballot page size or cause the ballot to be more than one page, increasing costs. The estimated cost per constitutional amendment is \$35 thousand to \$50 thousand, depending on the size and number of ballots and if additional ballot stations are needed.

Should this proposed constitutional amendment be approved by voters, a move to a 45-day session each fiscal year should result in savings in odd-numbered fiscal years and additional costs in even-numbered fiscal years that overall would balance out. The overall budget impact for the Legislature, Legislative Council Service (LCS), and legislative staff is therefore zero.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The amendment eliminates the distinction between even- and odd-numbered year regular sessions and limits them to 45 days. The joint resolution would also remove subject matter restrictions on bills and allow veto override bills from any session within the two-year period.

With some exceptions, Section 2-6-1 NMSA 1978 imposes a time limit within which bills may be introduced during sessions of the Legislature, limiting introduction of most bills to the 30th legislative day in regular sessions held in odd-numbered years and the 15th legislative day in regular sessions held in even-numbered years. This statute would remain in force, which may not give the Legislature enough time in certain fiscal years to consider bills and solicit public input. However, it might give the Legislature and legislative staff more time to finalize the General Appropriation Act than the time afforded now during the current short session length of 30 days.

If sessions start one week earlier, the “prohibited period” for soliciting campaign contributions could be shorter in January. There may also be less time to pre-file bills before the official start of the session; changing this date for that purpose likely requires a rule change from the LCS.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

If HJR1 is ratified by voters, and until the proposed change is fully adopted, there will be additional work for the Legislative Council Service while they update rules and procedures for the Legislature. Existing staff and budget resources should be sufficient to accomplish this effort.

AHO/rl/hj