



Fair Districts New Mexico - Redistricting Reform in New Mexico

In 2019 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to rule on two cases challenging state redistricting in North Carolina and Maryland and has said it is the responsibility of the states. Fourteen states have created independent legislative redistricting commissions. At least six other states are considering adopting some type of redistricting reform prior to 2021 and there is movement towards reform in even more states. What can we do in New Mexico?

First, let's look at the recent history of redistricting in New Mexico. From 1960 to 1991, New Mexico had to get pre-clearance by the US Department of Justice to ensure that the state's maps complied with federal standards for fair representation. In 1995, DOJ once again required pre-clearance after the 1992 amended maps violated the standards. In 2001, the maps the legislature approved and the governor signed were challenged by several parties. This cost New Mexico \$1.7 million in litigation costs, and the courts drew the lines for the districts. In 2011 the redistricting process again failed. Numerous lawsuits, appeals, and counter-appeals resulted. Finally, in February 2012 a Federal District Court ruled that the New Mexico Supreme Court's mapping decisions would stand. This cost the state an additional \$5 million in legal fees.

More importantly than the costs is the fact that lengthy court battles severely undermine the public's confidence in the redistricting process and in their legislators.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico has received funding from the Thornburg Foundation to conduct a Fair Districts for New Mexico Project. In addition, the League of Women Voters of the US (LWVUS) has made fair redistricting throughout the country a priority project. As part of the project we wish for a discussion with New Mexico policymakers on how we make the 2021 redistricting process fairer and more transparent. At this point we are not being prescriptive. **The Thornburg Foundation has funded New Mexico First to convene a Redistricting Task Force to help develop recommendations**, which is now in process.

New Mexico was one of the last states to create an Independent Ethics Commission. Let us not be one of the last to reform redistricting.

Some of Fair Districts New Mexico partners:

New Mexico Ethics Watch, League of Women Voters of New Mexico, New Mexico First, ACLU-NM, Common Cause New Mexico, NAACP Doña Ana County, Save Our Western Way of Life, New Mexico Open Elections

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