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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

BILL NUMBER: Senate Joint Resolution 4

SHORT TITLE: Session Length & Bill Consideration, CA

SPONSOR: Lopez/Pinto/Sedillo Lopez

LAST ORIGINAL
UPDATE: _____ **DATE:** 1/28/2026 **ANALYST:** Hanika-Ortiz

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
SOS for ballots	No fiscal impact	\$35.0 to \$50.0	No fiscal impact	\$35.0 to \$50.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund
LCS, if ratified	No fiscal impact	No fiscal impact	\$5,700.0	\$5,700.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Joint Resolution 4

Senate Joint Resolution 4 (SJR4) proposes to amend Article 4, Section 5, of the Constitution of New Mexico to provide that each regular session of the Legislature shall not exceed 60 days, removes the restrictions on bills that may be considered in even-numbered years, and provides for consideration of veto overrides, bills from a regular, special or extraordinary legislative session.

The joint resolution provides for the amendment to be put before the voters at the next general election (November 2026) or a special election called for the purpose of considering the amendment. The amendment would only be effective if approved by voters.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The per diem rate for legislators in New Mexico is set by the federal government and varies year to year. Shorter sessions also rely more heavily on interim activities, which can increase those costs.

Should this constitutional amendment be approved by the voters, data from the Legislative Council Service suggests the cost increase from a 30-day to a 60-day session could be about \$5.7 million, including pre-session preparation expenses. The impact would be first felt in early 2027.

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Under Section 1-16-4 NMSA 1978 and the New Mexico Constitution, the Secretary of State (SOS) is required to print samples of the text of each constitutional amendment in both Spanish and English in an amount equal to 10 percent of the registered voters in the state. SOS is required to publish the samples once a week for four weeks preceding the election in newspapers in every county in the state. The number of constitutional amendments on the ballot may impact the ballot page size or cause the ballot to be more than one page, also 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.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

SJR4 if ratified would eliminate the distinction between even- and odd-numbered-year regular sessions and set them all to 60 days. The bill would also remove subject matter restrictions on bills and allow veto override for bills from a previous session within the same legislative biennium.

Data from *Book of the States* and *National Conference of State Legislatures* suggests New Mexico (30/60 day) is in the smallest group of states with short session lengths. Other states in the group are Utah (45 day), Wyoming (40/20 day), South Dakota (40 day), Georgia (40 day), Virginia (60/45 day), Kentucky (30/60 day). States with medium session lengths are Arkansas (30/60 day), Nebraska (60/90 day), Maryland (90 day), Alaska (90 day), Montana (90 day), Florida (60 day).

With some exceptions, the fundraising prohibition in Section 1-29-34.1 NMSA 1978, that typically starts on January 1, would need to be extended to the end of each proposed 60-day session.

Shorter session lengths may limit legislative staff capacity to research and process complex issues on behalf of legislative members for bills introduced during 30-day legislative sessions. LFC staff's primary purpose in the 30-day session is to help produce and pass the General Appropriation Act which takes up most staff time. Sixty-day sessions allow more time for broader policy debates.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Section 2-6-1, NMSA 1978, says that no bill may be introduced at any regular session following the 30th legislative day in odd-numbered years or the 15th legislative day in even-numbered years. The limitation does not apply to the General Appropriation Act, bills for current expenses of government, and bills from the governor for emergencies or necessity requiring such legislation.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

If ratified by voters, and until the change is fully adopted, there will be additional work for the Legislative Council Service while they update rules and procedures for the Legislature.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

The joint resolution relates to House Joint Resolution 7 (HJR7), which proposes a constitutional

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amendment to remove restrictions on bills that may be considered in certain years and allows the Legislature to consider for veto override bills from some previous sessions in the same biennium.

This joint resolution also relates to House Joint Resolution 6 (HJR6), which also proposes a constitutional amendment to remove restrictions on bills that may be considered in certain years. However, HJR6 also proposes each legislative sessions be 45 days.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Under Section 1(B), the bill strikes (1) budgets, appropriations, revenue bills, and (2) special message bills and adds that the Legislature may consider veto override bills. It's unclear if by providing a specific action and striking all others, the Legislature may only consider veto override bills.

AHO/ct