



Santa Fe County Clerk's Office

240 Grant Ave, Santa Fe, NM 87501

505-986-6280 | clerk@santafecountynm.gov

Katharine E. Clark
County Clerk

Jennifer T. Wilson
Chief Deputy Clerk

Rosangela Ortiz
Chief Deputy, Bureau of Elections

September 29, 2026

RE: 2026 General Election Challenger and Watcher Training and Election Observation Information

Dear Political Party Chairs, Candidates, Election-Related Organizations, Challengers, Watchers, Election Observers, and Interested Members of the Public:

The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office is providing the following information regarding challenger and watcher training, appointments, credentials, polling-place access, parking, and observation of election operations for the November 3, 2026 General Election.

Required Challenger And Watcher Training - The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office will enforce the training requirement established by NMSA 1978, Section 1-2-22 in person. "Before accepting an appointment or entering into service as a challenger or watcher for an election, a person shall attend a training session in advance of that election. The training shall be provided by the county clerk based on a uniform curriculum provided by the secretary of state."

In-Person Training Schedule - All sessions will be conducted in person at the Small Animal Barn at the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds. Please do not park in designated parking for voters near the large building containing the polling site.

Monday, October 5, 2026 - 11:00 a.m.;

Thursday, October 8, 2026 - 4:00 p.m.;

Friday, October 16, 2026- 2:00 p.m.;

Tuesday, October 20, 2026- 4:00 p.m.;

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 - 11:00 a.m.

Full Attendance Required - A challenger or watcher must attend and complete the entire County Clerk training before the County Clerk's required certificate will be issued. Participants must arrive on time and remain for the full training session. Late participants will not receive a certificate for that session and will need to attend another scheduled training in its entirety.

The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office will verify compliance with the training requirement. A person who has not completed the required in-person County Clerk training and received the County Clerk's required certificate will not be permitted to serve as a challenger or watcher.

Completion of training is separate from appointment. A County Clerk training certificate does not, by itself, appoint or authorize a person to serve as a challenger or watcher.

Challenger Appointment Letters - County political party chairs appoint challengers in writing. As a party chair, please email challenger appointment letters to the Santa Fe County Clerk's Bureau of Elections as soon as appointments are made: elections@santafecountynm.gov

Each appointment letter must include the full name of each appointee. Each challenger should also bring a copy of the appointment letter when reporting to the presiding judge of a polling location or other election operation. Please provide the name and cell phone number of a designated party contact whom the Clerk's Office can contact if an issue involving one of the party's challengers arises.

If more than one challenger is appointed for the same polling location, please list the challengers in ranking order on the appointment letter. Only one challenger representing a political party will be permitted in the voting location at a time. When challengers rotate, a reasonable amount of time will be permitted for the incoming challenger to enter and check in with the Presiding Judge to verify credentials with the County Clerk's office before the outgoing challenger departs. This very brief transition period is intended to permit an orderly change between challengers and is not intended to allow more than one challenger representing the same political party to remain at the polling location.

Election-Related Organizations - Election-related organizations participating through the watcher process for the 2026 General Election were required to register with the New Mexico Secretary of State at least seventy days before the regularly scheduled statewide election.

Registration of an election-related organization does not, by itself, authorize every employee, volunteer, representative, attorney, or other person affiliated with that organization to enter a polling place or restricted area.

Individuals serving as watchers must have been properly appointed and must satisfy the applicable training and credentialing requirements of NMSA 1-2-22.

New Mexico does not permit self-appointed watchers.

Polling-Place Access: 50-Foot And 100-Foot Boundaries - Please be aware that New Mexico law establishes two separate restrictions surrounding polling locations.

Fifty-Foot Authorized-Person Area - NMSA 1978, Section 1-20-17 prohibits a person other than an authorized individual from approaching nearer than fifty feet from the door through which voters enter to vote. Authorized individuals include voters offering to vote, election board members, lawfully appointed challengers, watchers and election observers, individuals assisting a specific voter as authorized by law, election officials or contractors having business in the polling place, qualifying attorneys having business in the polling place, and language translators where required by federal law. Affiliation with an election-related organization does not, standing alone, make a person an authorized individual.

One-Hundred-Foot Electioneering Area - NMSA 1978, Section 1-20-16 separately prohibits electioneering within one hundred feet of the applicable polling-place boundary.

Electioneering includes campaigning, displaying or distributing campaign signs or literature, wearing or displaying campaign buttons, shirts, hats, pins or similar materials, and verbal or electronic solicitation of votes for a candidate or ballot question.

Representatives of political organizations, campaigns, advocacy organizations, election-related organizations, and other groups may not use the area within the one-hundred-foot boundary to campaign, solicit votes, conduct voter-turnout contacts, or approach voters for election-related advocacy or solicitation. Election-related organizations are not political parties merely by virtue of registering as an election-related organization.

Individuals associated with an election-related organization who are not separately authorized under the Election Code must remain outside the fifty-foot protected area. Regardless of

authorization, no person may engage in electioneering within the one-hundred-foot boundary.

Voter Access, Sidewalks And Congregating - Voters must be able to enter and leave polling locations freely and without interference.

Please do not loiter or congregate on sidewalks, walkways, curb cuts, entrances, exits, or other areas used by voters to access a polling location.

Do not position individuals or groups in a manner that requires voters to walk through or around the group in order to enter or leave the polling place.

Do not block, narrow, or otherwise interfere with pedestrian or vehicle access. Representatives of organizations should remain sufficiently removed from entrances and voter pathways to ensure voters have clear and unobstructed ingress and egress.

Parking at Polling Sites or Election Operation Locations - Parking designated for voters must remain available for voters. Parking designated for poll workers, election workers, or other staff must remain available for those individuals. Challengers, watchers, observers, representatives of election-related organizations, and other individuals present to observe election activities should not use parking spaces designated for voters or election staff. Please plan for off-site or other available public parking.

Parking At The Downtown County Building - Parking at the Santa Fe County building is extremely limited. Please do not park at the County building when observing election operations unless you require ADA-accessible parking or another disability-related accommodation. Parking at the County building must remain available for voters, constituents conducting County business, election workers, and County staff. Individuals observing election operations should plan to park elsewhere.

Voter Roster – We will be providing computers/tablets with voter rosters at our polling locations for challengers. If you are having technical issues with these devices, please ask the presiding judge to contact our office to assist. Please ensure your challengers leave the device for the next challenger from your party.

Election Boards And Election Operations - Election boards may convene before voting begins and may continue working after voting ends to reconcile election materials and complete their statutory duties at polling locations and other designated central Clerk operation locations.

Presiding Judges, messengers, and other authorized election officials may travel between polling places and designated Clerk operations locations to deliver absentee ballots, voted ballots, memory devices, election records, and other election materials.

Authorized challengers, watchers, or observers may observe processes to which their statutory authorization applies, subject to applicable restrictions and the lawful direction of election officials responsible for the location.

Observation must not interfere with election workers, election boards, voters, ballot processing, reconciliation, equipment operations, transportation of election materials, or other election administration.

Following Election Materials - If a challenger, watcher, or election observer chooses to travel to another authorized location to continue observing an election process, we ask that the individual first inform the Presiding Judge for situational awareness.

If you choose to follow Presiding Judges, messengers, or other election personnel transporting election materials to the County Clerk's Office, election warehouse, or another designated election operations location, please maintain a safe stopping distance. A safe stopping distance is at least three vehicle lengths if not more between your vehicle and the vehicle transporting election

materials.

Do not drive between a vehicle transporting election materials and its security escort vehicle. Do not interfere with, impede, closely pursue, or otherwise disrupt election personnel or security personnel transporting election materials.

The secure transportation and documented chain of custody of ballots, memory devices, and other election materials must not be disrupted.

Questions Or Issues At A Polling Location - The Presiding Judge is responsible for maintaining order at the polling location.

If a challenger, watcher, or observer has a question or concern regarding activity at a polling location, please raise the issue with the Presiding Judge rather than approaching voters or interfering with election workers performing their duties.

If the matter cannot be resolved at the polling location, the Presiding Judge may contact the Santa Fe County Clerk's Bureau of Elections.

For challengers, the Clerk's Office may also contact the designated political party contact provided with the challenger appointment letter if an issue arises.

Voting Locations And Election Information - Voting locations, voting dates and hours, and additional information regarding the 2026 General Election are available at: [SantaFe.vote](https://www.santafecountynm.gov/elections)

Questions concerning challenger and watcher training, appointments, election observation, or Santa Fe County election operations may be directed to: elections@santafecountynm.gov

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain an election process that is transparent, accessible, orderly, secure, and focused on ensuring that voters can exercise their rights without interference.

Voting Locations – Boards convene starting 1 hour before voting and will stop after reconciliation. They or messengers will travel to various designated Clerk operations locations to drop absentee ballots, memory cards, voted ballots, and other election materials and may reconvene to fully reconcile. Voting locations and hours can be found on our website, [SantaFe.vote](https://www.santafecountynm.gov/elections).

Absentee Board – The board will convene at the new election warehouse starting 1 week from election day and reconvene and convene at various times. By statute we will stop counting at the latest at 11pm on Election Night and if needed, reconvene at the earliest on Wednesday starting at 9am at the same location.

Poll Worker Training – Poll worker training will be at the Small Animal Barn at the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds Anex. Any additional follow-up or last-minute review training may occur at Clerk's operation buildings where we can provide direct assistance

Drop Boxes – Locations are on our website <https://www.santafecountynm.gov/clerk/elections/absentee-information#drop-boxes> and will be locked at 7pm on Election Day.

Turnout – you can view our turnout in real-time at <https://www.santafecountynm.gov/clerk/elections/2026-general-election>

Unofficial Results – will be posted on the SOS website starting after 7pm on Election Night. The link is <https://electionresults.sos.nm.gov/default.aspx>. Typically, ballots that still need curing, absentee ballots in custody but could not be counted before 11pm, provisional ballots and other hand tally ballots may be uploaded during the canvass and not part of election night uploads.

Canvass Board – The canvassing board will be convening starting 10am on Thursday, November 5th and will meet as needed up until Friday November 13th.

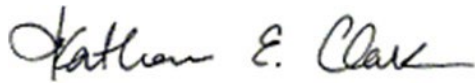
County Canvass Board Certification – The County Canvass Board will meet to certify the results of the 2026 General Election on Friday, November 13th at 10:00 am.

If you have any questions, please contact us at elections@santafecountynm.gov or 505-986-6280.

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Thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain an election process that is transparent, accessible, orderly, secure, and focused on ensuring that voters can exercise their rights without interference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katharine E. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Katharine E. Clark
Santa Fe County Clerk

xc: Rosangela Ortiz, Chief Deputy-Bureau of Elections, Santa Fe County Clerk's office
Steve Fresquez, Voting Systems Administration & Warehouse Manager, Santa Fe County Clerk's Office