

SANTA FE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

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SJR 1 Passes Legislature, Advancing Clerks' Priority to Improve Election Access and Administration

Santa Fe County, NM – The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office is pleased to announce that Senate Joint Resolution 1 (SJR 1), a legislative priority of the New Mexico Clerks' Affiliate, passed the New Mexico Legislature during the 2026 Regular Legislative Session and will be placed before voters as a proposed constitutional amendment this upcoming 2026 General Election. Sponsored by Senators Linda M. Trujillo and Natalie Figueroa, SJR 1 would allow school districts to place ballot questions on general elections if approved by voters, rather than requiring separate, standalone special elections.

The requirement that school elections be held separately from partisan elections dates back to New Mexico's original 1910 Constitution. At the time, women were only permitted to vote in school elections and were excluded from general elections. While this provision reflected the legal framework of the early 20th century, it no longer aligns with modern voting rights or election administration practices. Removing this 114-year-old inequity would eliminate outdated, discriminatory language and allow school elections to be combined with general elections.

Currently, school districts are the only special district in New Mexico that are constitutionally required to place bond questions in a separate election from general elections. This structure creates additional administrative complexity and costs for school districts and adds operational burden to county clerk offices, which are responsible for administering elections while already preparing for regular election cycles. Adding bond questions to general elections would help streamline election administration, improve efficiency, and support higher voter participation.

The passage of SJR 1 reflects a long-standing priority of the New Mexico Clerks' Affiliate, a statewide association representing county clerks and election administrators across New Mexico. Clerks' offices across the state supported this proposal and worked collaboratively to elevate the issue during the legislative session, providing technical insight into how the change would benefit voters, schools, and election administration. Santa Fe County Clerk Katharine E. Clark currently serves as the New Mexico Clerks' Affiliate's elected Legislative Chair and helped lead the Affiliate's advocacy efforts around this resolution during the 2026 legislative session.

"This is an exciting step forward for voters and for election administrators across New Mexico," said Clerk Clark. "SJR 1 reflects years of work by county clerks to improve the efficiency, accessibility, and consistency of our election system. We're proud to see this proposal move forward to voters, who will ultimately decide whether to make this change to our state constitution."

Rosangela Ortiz, Deputy Clerk of Elections for Santa Fe County and recently re-elected Chair of the New Mexico Clerks' Affiliate, highlighted the Affiliate's continued success in advancing shared legislative priorities.

"Over the past two legislative sessions, county clerks across New Mexico have come together with a unified voice to advance practical, voter-centered improvements to election administration," said Ortiz. "Last session, clerks successfully advanced SB 290 to modernize and better support county clerk

operations statewide. This session, we're proud to see another Affiliate priority, SJR 1, move forward. These wins reflect the strong leadership and collaboration of clerks across the state, working to strengthen election administration for voters in every community."

The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office thanks Senators Trujillo and Figueroa for sponsoring SJR 1 and expresses appreciation to the New Mexico Legislature and the New Mexico Secretary of State for advancing a measure shaped by the lived operational experience of local election administrators.

Because SJR 1 is a constitutional amendment, it will not take effect unless approved by voters at a future general election. As the proposal moves toward the ballot, the New Mexico Clerks' Affiliate and county clerks across the state will prioritize voter education efforts to ensure voters understand what the proposed amendment would do and how it could impact future school elections.

The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office will continue to provide nonpartisan information to voters about this proposed constitutional amendment as it approaches the ballot.

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