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HOUSE BILL 54

**56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2023**

INTRODUCED BY

Natalie Figueroa

AN ACT

RELATING TO PRIMARY ELECTIONS; ALLOWING VOTERS WHO HAVE NOT DESIGNATED A MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION ON THEIR CERTIFICATES OF REGISTRATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PRIMARY ELECTION PROCESS BY CHOOSING TO AFFILIATE WITH A MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY PARTICIPATING IN A PRIMARY BY REQUESTING THE PARTY'S BALLOT; MAKING CONFORMING CHANGES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 1-4-15 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969, Chapter 240, Section 71, as amended) is amended to read:

"1-4-15. REGISTRATION--CHANGE OF PARTY AFFILIATION.--

A. A voter may change the voter's designated party affiliation by executing a new certificate of registration indicating the change of party affiliation.

B. A voter who has previously declined to designate

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1 a party affiliation on the voter's certificate of registration  
2 but who desires to designate a party affiliation on the voter's  
3 certificate of registration shall execute a new certificate of  
4 registration indicating the desired party affiliation.

5 C. A voter who does not designate on the  
6 certificate of registration a party affiliation shall be  
7 considered to have declined to designate a party affiliation.

8 D. A voter who has declined to designate on the  
9 voter's certificate of registration a party affiliation, or who  
10 designated affiliation with a party other than a major  
11 political party on the voter's certificate of registration, but  
12 who chooses to affiliate with a major political party that is  
13 participating in a primary election may do so by requesting the  
14 ballot of one of the parties participating in that primary  
15 election. The voter's certificate of registration shall not be  
16 changed to reflect a new or different party affiliation unless  
17 the voter so requests in accordance with the provisions of  
18 Subsection B of this section."

19 SECTION 2. Section 1-6-4 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969,  
20 Chapter 240, Section 130, as amended) is amended to read:

21 "1-6-4. MAILED BALLOT APPLICATION.--

22 A. In a statewide election, application by a voter  
23 for a mailed ballot shall be made only on a paper form or its  
24 online equivalent. The form shall identify the applicant and  
25 contain information to establish the applicant's qualification

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1 for issuance of a mailed ballot under the Absent Voter Act;  
2 provided that only on the application form for a primary  
3 election ballot there shall be a box, space or place provided  
4 for designation of the voter's political party affiliation; and  
5 further provided that a voter who has declined to designate a  
6 party affiliation on the voter's certificate of registration or  
7 who designated affiliation with a party other than a major  
8 political party on the voter's certificate of registration, but  
9 who chooses to affiliate with a major political party  
10 participating in a primary election shall be provided the  
11 option on the application form for a mailed ballot in a primary  
12 election to request the ballot of one of the parties  
13 participating in the primary election.

14 B. Each application on a paper form for a mailed  
15 ballot shall be signed by the applicant and shall require the  
16 applicant's printed name, registration address and year of  
17 birth to be supplied by the applicant, which shall constitute  
18 the required form of identification. When submitted by the  
19 voter, the county clerk shall accept an application for a  
20 mailed ballot pursuant to this subsection regardless of whether  
21 the application for a mailed ballot is delivered to the county  
22 clerk on paper or by electronic means. When submitted by a  
23 third party, the county clerk shall not accept an application  
24 for a mailed ballot pursuant to this subsection if the  
25 application for a mailed ballot is delivered by electronic

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1 means.

2 C. The secretary of state shall allow a voter to  
3 submit an online application for a mailed ballot through a  
4 website authorized by the secretary of state; provided that the  
5 voter shall have a current or expired New Mexico driver's  
6 license or state identification card issued by the motor  
7 vehicle division of the taxation and revenue department. An  
8 online request for a mailed ballot shall contain all of the  
9 information that is required for a paper form. The voter shall  
10 also provide the person's full New Mexico driver's license  
11 number or state identification card number.

12 D. When a voter requests a mailed ballot pursuant  
13 to this section, the voter shall mark the box associated with  
14 the following statement, which shall be included as part of the  
15 online mailed ballot request form:

16 "By clicking the boxes below, I swear or affirm all of the  
17 following:

18 [ ] I am the person whose name and identifying  
19 information is provided on this form and I desire to request a  
20 mailed ballot to vote in the state of New Mexico; and

21 [ ] All of the information that I have provided on  
22 this form is true and correct as of the date I am submitting  
23 this form."

24 E. Online applications for mailed ballots shall  
25 retain the dates of submission by the qualified elector and of

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1 acceptance by the county clerk. For purposes of deadlines  
2 contained in the Election Code, the time and date of the  
3 submission by the voter shall be considered the time and date  
4 when the application for a mailed ballot is received by the  
5 county clerk.

6 F. New registrants who registered for the first  
7 time in this state by mail and at that time did not provide  
8 acceptable documentary identification as required by federal  
9 law shall be informed of the need to comply with federal  
10 identification requirements when returning the requested  
11 ballot. The secretary of state shall issue rules to exempt  
12 voters from submitting identification only as required by  
13 federal law and shall review and, if necessary, update these  
14 rules no later than March 15 of even-numbered years.

15 G. A person who willfully and with knowledge and  
16 intent to deceive or mislead any voter, election board,  
17 canvassing board, county clerk or other election official and  
18 who falsifies any information on an absentee ballot request  
19 form or who affixes a signature or mark other than the person's  
20 own on a mailed ballot request form is guilty of a fourth  
21 degree felony."

22 SECTION 3. Section 1-6-22.1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2009,  
23 Chapter 251, Section 1 and Laws 2009, Chapter 274, Section 1,  
24 as amended) is amended to read:

25 "1-6-22.1. MAIL BALLOT ELECTION PRECINCT--ABSENTEE VOTING  
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1 IN LIEU OF POLLING PLACE.--

2 A. Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections  
3 1-1-11 and 1-1-12 NMSA 1978, not later than the first Monday in  
4 November of each odd-numbered year, a board of county  
5 commissioners may designate a precinct as a mail ballot  
6 election precinct if, upon a written request of the county  
7 clerk, it finds that the precinct has fewer than one hundred  
8 voters and the nearest polling place for an adjoining precinct  
9 is more than twenty miles driving distance from the boundary  
10 for the precinct in question.

11 B. If a precinct is designated a mail ballot  
12 election precinct, in addition to the notice required pursuant  
13 to Section 1-3-8 NMSA 1978, the county clerk shall notify by  
14 mail with delivery confirmation all voters in that precinct at  
15 least forty-two days before an election that each voter will be  
16 sent an absentee ballot twenty-eight days before the election  
17 and that there will be no polling place for the precinct on  
18 election day. The county clerk shall include in the notice a  
19 card informing the voter that if the voter does not want to  
20 receive an absentee ballot for that election, the voter should  
21 return the card before the date the county clerk is scheduled  
22 to mail out absentee ballots. The notice shall also inform the  
23 voter that a voting system equipped for persons with  
24 disabilities will be available at all early voting sites before  
25 election day and in the office of the county clerk on election

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1 day in case the voter prefers to vote in person and not by  
2 mail. In addition, the notice shall inform the voter if the  
3 county is consolidating precincts on election day and, if so,  
4 the ability of the voter to cast a ballot at any consolidated  
5 precinct on election day if the voter chooses not to receive an  
6 absentee ballot, or to cast a provisional ballot at any  
7 consolidated precinct if the voter does not receive an absentee  
8 ballot, which will be counted upon confirmation that the voter  
9 has not returned the absentee ballot.

10 C. For a primary election, the card sent to voters  
11 who have not designated a party affiliation on their  
12 certificates of registration, or who designated affiliation  
13 with a party other than a major political party on the voter's  
14 certificate of registration, shall require that such voters  
15 return the card and indicate which major political party's  
16 ballot they choose for that primary election.

17 ~~[G.]~~ D. The county clerk shall mail each voter in  
18 the mail ballot election precinct an absentee ballot on the  
19 twenty-eighth day before an election, unless the voter has  
20 requested otherwise or does not return the card required by  
21 Subsection C of this section indicating which party ballot the  
22 voter chooses for that election, along with a notice that there  
23 will be no polling place in that precinct on election day.

24 ~~[D.]~~ E. The county clerk shall keep a sufficient  
25 number of ballots from a mail ballot election precinct such

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1 that a voter from that precinct may vote on a replacement or  
2 provisional paper ballot pursuant to Section 1-6-16 NMSA 1978  
3 or on an emergency paper ballot pursuant to Section 1-6-16.2  
4 NMSA 1978."

5 SECTION 4. Section 1-12-7 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969,  
6 Chapter 240, Section 246, as amended) is amended to read:

7 "1-12-7. CONDUCT OF ELECTION--PERSONS NOT PERMITTED TO  
8 VOTE--PERSONS PERMITTED TO VOTE UPON CHOOSING TO AFFILIATE WITH  
9 A PARTY.--

10 A. A person shall not vote in a primary, general or  
11 statewide special election unless [he] the person is a voter of  
12 the county in which [he] the person offers to vote. A valid  
13 original certificate of registration in the county register is  
14 prima facie evidence of being a voter in the precinct.

15 ~~[B. A person whose major party affiliation is not~~  
16 ~~designated on his original certificate of registration shall~~  
17 ~~not vote in a primary election.~~

18 ~~G.]~~ B. A person at a primary election shall not be  
19 permitted to vote for the candidate of any party other than the  
20 party designated on [his] the person's current certificate of  
21 registration; provided that a person who has declined to  
22 designate a political party affiliation on the person's  
23 certificate of registration, or who designated affiliation with  
24 a party other than a major political party on the voter's  
25 certificate of registration, shall be permitted to choose to

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1 affiliate with a major political party in a primary election by  
2 requesting a major political party's primary election ballot  
3 and shall be permitted to vote for the candidates on that  
4 party's ballot."

5 SECTION 5. Section 1-12-7.1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969,  
6 Chapter 240, Section 112, as amended) is amended to read:

7 "1-12-7.1. VOTER LISTS--SIGNATURE ROSTERS--CHECKLIST OF  
8 VOTERS--USE DURING ELECTION.--

9 A. At each election day polling location, other  
10 than a consolidated precinct where any voter in the county may  
11 vote, the precinct board shall post securely at or near the  
12 entrance of the polling place one copy of an alphabetical list  
13 of voters and a map of the precincts represented in that  
14 polling place for use of the voters prior to voting. The  
15 posted copy shall not contain a listing of voter addresses,  
16 years, months or days of birth or social security numbers.

17 B. At each polling location where physical rosters  
18 are used, the presiding judge of the precinct board shall  
19 assign one judge or election clerk of the board to be in charge  
20 of one copy of the checklist of voters, which shall be used to  
21 confirm the registration and voting of each person offering to  
22 vote.

23 C. The presiding judge of the precinct board shall  
24 assign one judge or election clerk to be in charge of the  
25 signature roster.

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1           D. The judge or election clerk assigned to confirm  
2 registration shall determine that each person offering to vote  
3 is registered and, in the case of a primary election, that the  
4 voter is either currently registered in a party designated on  
5 the primary election ballot or has declined to designate a  
6 party affiliation on the voter's certificate of registration,  
7 or who designated affiliation with a party other than a major  
8 political party on the voter's certificate of registration, and  
9 chooses to affiliate with a major political party for that  
10 primary election by requesting a ballot of a party designated  
11 on the primary election ballot. If the person's registration  
12 is confirmed and the voter provides the required voter  
13 identification, the judge or election clerk shall announce to  
14 the judges or election clerks the list number and the name of  
15 the voter as shown on the checklist of voters. If the voter  
16 does not provide the required voter identification, the voter  
17 shall be allowed to vote on a provisional paper ballot and  
18 shall provide the required voter identification to the county  
19 clerk's office before 5:00 p.m. on the second day following the  
20 election, or to the precinct board before the polls close, or  
21 the voter's provisional ballot shall not be qualified. If the  
22 required voter identification is provided, the voter's  
23 provisional paper ballot shall be qualified and the voter shall  
24 not vote on any other type of ballot.

25           E. The judge or election clerk shall locate the

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1 name on the signature roster and shall require the voter to  
2 sign the voter's usual signature or, if unable to write, to  
3 make the voter's mark opposite the voter's printed name. If  
4 the voter makes the voter's mark, it shall be witnessed by one  
5 of the judges or election clerks of the precinct board.

6 F. If the signature roster indicates that the voter  
7 is required to present a physical form of identification before  
8 voting, the judge or election clerk shall ask the voter for the  
9 required physical form of identification. If the voter does  
10 not provide the required identification, the voter shall be  
11 allowed to vote on a provisional paper ballot; provided,  
12 however, that if the voter brings the required physical form of  
13 identification to the polling place after casting a provisional  
14 paper ballot, that ballot shall be qualified.

15 G. The judge or election clerk shall follow the  
16 procedures provided for in Sections 1-12-7.2 and 1-12-8 NMSA  
17 1978 if a person whose name does not appear on the signature  
18 roster requests to vote or a person is required to vote on a  
19 provisional paper ballot.

20 H. A voter shall not be permitted to vote until the  
21 voter has properly signed the voter's usual signature or made  
22 the voter's mark in the signature roster."

23 SECTION 6. Section 1-12-7.2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969,  
24 Chapter 240, Section 114, as amended) is amended to read:

25 "1-12-7.2. VOTER WHOSE NAME IS NOT ON LIST OR ROSTER.--

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1           A. A voter whose name does not appear on the voter  
2 list and signature roster for the precinct in which the voter  
3 offers to vote shall be permitted to vote in the precinct  
4 pursuant to the federal National Voter Registration Act of 1993  
5 and Section 1-12-8 NMSA 1978.

6           B. The judges or election clerks in charge of the  
7 signature rosters shall add the voter's name and address in ink  
8 to the signature roster on the line immediately following the  
9 last entered voter's name, and the voter shall be allowed to  
10 sign an affidavit of eligibility and cast a provisional paper  
11 ballot; provided that the voter has first signed or marked both  
12 the signature roster and checklist of registered voters.

13           C. The provisional paper ballot tracking number for  
14 the voter shall be entered on the affidavit of eligibility, the  
15 signature roster and the checklist of registered voters.

16           D. In a primary election, a voter shall not be  
17 permitted to vote for a candidate of a party different from the  
18 party designation shown on the voter's certificate of  
19 registration unless the voter's certificate of registration  
20 shows that the voter has declined to designate a party  
21 affiliation or that the voter designated affiliation with a  
22 party other than a major political party on the voter's  
23 certificate of registration, and the voter chooses to affiliate  
24 with a major political party for that primary election by  
25 requesting the ballot of a party participating in the primary.

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1 Upon making that determination, the county clerk shall transmit  
2 the ballot to the county canvassing board to be tallied and  
3 included in the canvass of that county for the appropriate  
4 precinct."

5 SECTION 7. Section 1-12-20 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1969,  
6 Chapter 240, Section 273, as amended) is amended to read:

7 "1-12-20. CONDUCT OF ELECTION--INTERPOSING CHALLENGES.--A  
8 challenge may be interposed by a member of the precinct board  
9 or by a party challenger for the following reasons:

10 A. the person offering to vote is not registered to  
11 vote;

12 B. the person offering to vote is listed among  
13 those persons to whom an absentee ballot was mailed;

14 C. the person offering to vote has already cast a  
15 ballot in that election;

16 D. the person offering to vote is improperly  
17 registered because the person is not a qualified elector; or

18 E. in the case of a primary election, the person  
19 desiring to vote is ~~[not]~~ currently affiliated with a political  
20 party represented on the ballot but the person requests a  
21 ballot for a party with which the person is not affiliated."

22 SECTION 8. Section 1-15A-2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1977,  
23 Chapter 230, Section 2, as amended) is amended to read:

24 "1-15A-2. VOTING IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY--DATE OF  
25 ELECTION.--

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1           A. In the year in which the president and vice  
2 president of the United States are to be elected, the  
3 registered voters of this state shall be given an opportunity  
4 to express their preference for the person to be the  
5 presidential candidate of their political party in either a  
6 presidential primary election or in accordance with the  
7 selection procedure for presidential candidates of each voter's  
8 party. The presidential primary election shall be held on the  
9 same date as the primary election is held in this state.

10           B. A voter may vote in a presidential primary  
11 election on the ballot of only one of the parties participating  
12 in the primary election in accordance with the provisions of  
13 Section 1-12-7 NMSA 1978."

14           SECTION 9. Section 1-15A-8 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1977,  
15 Chapter 230, Section 7, as amended) is amended to read:

16           "1-15A-8. VOTING IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY--BALLOT  
17 POSITION.--

18           A. All candidates in the presidential primary  
19 election shall appear with the candidates for other offices of  
20 their respective parties at an appropriate place on the ballot.  
21 Candidates who are nominated by committee and by petition shall  
22 be placed first as a group on the presidential primary ballot  
23 with each candidate's respective position in that group  
24 determined by the provisions of [~~the Ballot Positioning Act~~]  
25 Section 1-10-8.1 NMSA 1978. The ballot position for the

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1 uncommitted category shall be placed last on the presidential  
2 primary ballot.

3 B. The voter shall be able to cast ~~[his]~~ a ballot  
4 for one of the presidential candidates of ~~[his]~~ the party with  
5 which the voter is affiliated or, if the voter has declined to  
6 designate a party affiliation on the voter's certificate of  
7 registration or the voter designated affiliation with a party  
8 other than a major political party on the voter's certificate  
9 of registration, the party with which the voter chooses to  
10 affiliate in that election in accordance with the provisions of  
11 Section 1-12-7 NMSA 1978 or for an uncommitted delegation. A  
12 vote of the latter kind shall express the preference for an  
13 uncommitted delegation from New Mexico to the national  
14 convention of ~~[that voter's]~~ the party with which the voter is  
15 affiliated in the primary election."

16 SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
17 provisions of this act is July 1, 2023.