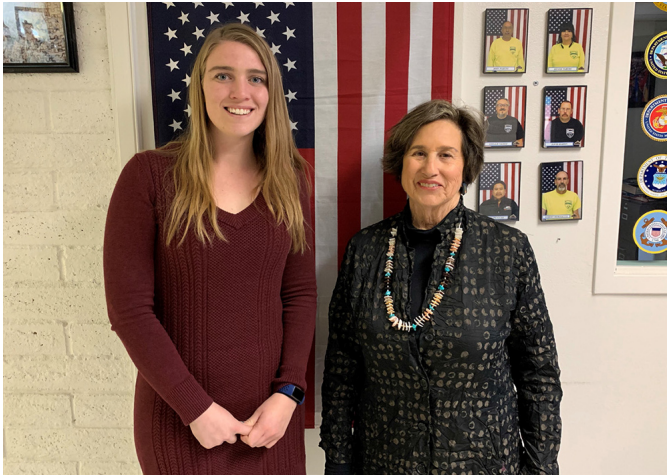


## N.M. Democratic Party gears up for pre-primary convention in Gallup

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 06 March 2020 11:11

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The Democratic Party of New Mexico is in the midst of holding precinct, ward and county pre-primary conventions in advance of the state pre-primary convention slated for March 7.

The pre-primary convention is one way Democrats decide who will be on the ballot for the June 2 primary. These conventions allow Democrats to come together, discuss issues and hear from candidates.

DPNM staff and officers are traveling the state attending pre-primary conventions to ensure the processes are smooth.

DPNM Chair Marg Elliston and DPNM Communications Director Miranda van Dijk attended the McKinley County pre-primary convention Feb. 22, and spoke with the *Sun* about the convention as well as the upcoming elections. Both of them were previously in McKinley County for the DPNM State Central Committee meeting last October.

“There’s a lot of folks running who want to replace [Rep.] Ben Ray Lujan, so there’s a lot of interest in getting those candidates on the ballot,” Elliston said. “We’re hearing from representatives of those campaigns and who we want to have as our next congressperson from this district.”

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The conventions are one way candidates can get their names on the ballot, van Dijk confirmed.

“Outside of the [ballot], I think it’s a great way for Democrats to come together,” van Dijk said. “We’ve seen a really high turnout this year, so it’s exciting for us to see so many Democrats in one place.”

Both Elliston and van Dijk were excited and motivated by the enthusiasm they witnessed at the pre-primary convention.

“People are really fired up and wanting to participate in this upcoming election cycle in 2020,” Elliston said. “We’ve seen a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of interest, and lots of concern.”

“After the incredible turnout and success Democrats saw in 2018 with electing our governor and electing Democrats up and down the ballot, DPNM is focused on keeping that momentum going,” van Dijk said. “We’re starting to train people across the state on using data and new technologies to more effectively reach out to voters in their district.”

More than listening to local voters and selecting candidates, Elliston said the conventions are an opportunity to support the local elected officials.

“Senator [George] Muñoz was here, and he spoke about the accomplishments at the legislative sessions,” Elliston said. “He just became vice chairperson of the Senate Finance Committee, which is a very powerful post. There are a lot of well-connected state representatives from McKinley County.”

Muñoz, D-McKinley, San Juan, is one of the “powerhouses” in McKinley County, Elliston added, alongside Rep. Doreen Johnson, D-McKinley, San Juan, and Rep. Patricia Lundstrom, D - McKinley, San Juan, which is why DPNM wanted to come out and cheer them on and thank them for their efforts.

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The McKinley County convention is one of 33 being held before the state pre-primary convention.

“We’re reaching out through these pre-primary committees in every county in the state,” Elliston said. “We’re out to listen to what’s going on in specific counties.”

Once the pre-primary conventions have concluded, Ellison said DPNM has their next goal in mind.

“The next big step is the primary [election],” Elliston said. “That’s what’s going to make the decision what Democrat is going to be on the ballot for Congressional District 3, which is where we are. We’re also going to decide what candidates New Mexicans want to see as President of the United States.”

Elliston added that during the last election in 2016, the state came down to a split between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton when considering who should be the Democratic presidential nominee. She thinks there could also be a split in 2020.

After the primary election, the next step is going to be selecting the delegates to attend the Democratic National Convention, which is slated for July 13-16 in Milwaukee, Wis.

“That involves us gearing up for a coordinated campaign once we have our nominees,” van Dijk said. “We’ll also be continuing to reach out and start to build up our field strategy, staff up with field organizers.”

Ellison said the DPNM has their nominees in mind for the U.S. Senate as well as several N.M. districts, and their goal is to continue their outreach.

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“We’re trying to get more people involved, to make good choices for the next election,” Elliston said.

By Cody Begaye  
Sun Correspondent