

Senate passes legislation to expand voter registration time period

Written by By NM Senate Democrats
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SANTA FE – The New Mexico Senate passed by a vote of 19 to 11 Senator Jeff Steinborn's, D-Doña Ana, bill to allow qualified New Mexico residents to register to vote up until three days prior to an election at certain locations March 1.

Current law allows voter registration to occur only until 28 days preceding an election. If enacted, SB 224 would enable the largest expansion of voter registration rights in many years in the state.

"I am grateful to the Senate for supporting this important voting rights reform today. It is imperative that the Legislature expand voting opportunities in New Mexico, and remove hurdles where they exist," Steinborn said. " This bill will do that. This legislation will greatly expand the time period that citizens can register to vote and result in more people exercising their right to vote. When more citizens participate in our democracy, our democracy is stronger."

SB 224 would change current law to allow qualified citizens to register at any early voting center or a county clerk's office until three days before a primary and a general election. The bill would increase the length of time during which voters may register by 25 days, while putting in place safeguards to maintain the security of the state's voter registration system.

"I'm very pleased that the state senate has embraced increasing access to the ballot box and making it easier for every eligible citizen to cast a ballot. I'm grateful for their support, and look forward to making a strong case for this legislation when it is considered by the House," New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver said.

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Viki Harrison, Executive Director of New Mexico Common Cause lauded Steinborn for working to ensure all eligible New Mexicans are registered to vote.

“Democracy works best when the highest number of people participate in the process, Harrison said. “Low voter turnout has been a problem in New Mexico, and registering through early voting is an effective way to boost voter turnout.”

Meredith Machen, President of the New Mexico League of Women Voters said Steinborn’s bill greatly expands civic engagement and participation.

“Many young would-be voters have been shut out of voting because they do not realize that there is a 28-day deadline,” she said. “The three-day application allows for ample time for voter registrations to be processed. We appreciate Sen. Steinborn’s efforts to promote democracy through this common sense legislation.”

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