

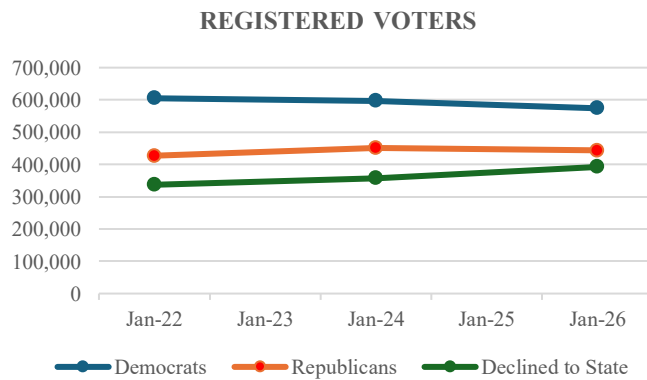


NEW MEXICO’S NEW SEMI-OPEN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The upcoming elections on June 2, 2026, will be the first time New Mexico will allow for **Declined to State**—otherwise known as **Independent**—voters to participate in primary elections. During the 2025 Regular Session, a bill was signed into law allowing those voters who are not part of a major political party to participate in primary elections. Declined to State voters make this selection when they vote by either requesting a Democrat or Republican ballot when voting in person or by selecting a party ballot when requesting an absentee ballot. A primary election is held to allow voters to select major party candidates to move on to represent the political parties in the general election.

In New Mexico, general elections for state-level offices are mostly uncompetitive, meaning the real decisions are made in the primaries. However, turnout for these primaries is typically low, and prior to having semi-open primaries, Declined to State voters were excluded. In 2024, about 83% of state house races were effectively decided during closed primaries, with only about 14% of New Mexicans casting votes that truly impacted the outcome of those elections. So, casting your vote in the primary election is very important.

As of January 2026, the New Mexico Secretary of State’s office reports that nearly 26% of registered voters in the state are Declined to State. Almost 41% of registered voters in New Mexico are Democrat, and nearly 32% are registered as Republican.



How the New Law Works:

Starting in 2026, registered Declined to State voters will be allowed to choose a Democratic or Republican ballot when requesting an absentee ballot, when voting early, or when voting on the day of the primary election. For the **primary election on June 2, 2026**, the standard deadline to register to vote or update voter registration (including party changes) is **May 5, 2026**, for online or mailed updates. However, New Mexico also allows **same-day voter registration**, so individuals who are not yet registered can register and vote on the same day. Same-day voter registration also means that a voter can update their registration—such as changing from Republican to DTS and Democrat to DTS—at a polling location during early voting or on election day and then casting an immediate vote.

What This Means for Voters:

This change gives Declined to State voters meaningful influence in shaping the choices available in both the primary and general elections. Whether they wish to support a candidate they

believe is best qualified or help block a candidate they oppose, Declined to State voters can now use their vote strategically.

Before this reform, many Declined to State voters would re-register with a major party prior to June in order to vote in primary elections. While this workaround was legal under registration rules, it added complexity and often discouraged participation. Major party voters have long used this type of strategic voting — supporting the candidate they view as the stronger or more qualified option, even if not their ideal choice, to prevent a less desirable candidate from winning the primary and potentially the general election. As it stands now under the new law, registered Republicans can vote for Democrats in the primary election by temporarily switching party affiliation to Decline to State, and registered Democrats can do the same and vote for Republicans in the primary election by temporarily switching party affiliation to Decline to State. This can be done ahead of election day or at the election site during early voting or election day voting.

Important Dates for the Primary Election:

- **May 5** - Voter registration deadline for online or mail-in registrations. For online registrations, visit [NMVote.org](https://nmvote.org);
- **May 5** - Early voting at the County Clerk's office opens. Visit <https://grantcountynm.gov/218/Elections> for locations and hours;
- **May 16** - Expanded early voting sites open;
- **May 19** - Absentee ballot request deadline. Contact <https://grantcountynm.gov/218/Elections> for absentee ballot information;
- **May 30** - Early voting ends; and
- **June 2** - Primary election day and in-person voting day.

Primary Election Candidates:

Voting is one of the most direct ways New Mexico residents can shape the decisions that affect their daily lives—from education and public safety to taxes, infrastructure, and natural resource policy. Elections determine not only who represents the state at the federal, state, and local levels, but also which policies and priorities move forward. By participating in elections, voters ensure their voices are heard, help hold elected officials accountable, and contribute to a government that reflects the will of the people. Voting is a fundamental way to protect your interests, support your community, protect jobs, and take part in the democratic process.

New Mexico will hold primary and general elections in 2026 for select federal offices, statewide offices, the state House of Representatives, as well as Magistrate Judges, County Commissioners, County Sheriffs, County Assessors, and Probate Judges. Below is a list of some of the candidates that voters in Grant County will see on either the Democratic or Republican ballots during the primary election. For more information on each candidate, their websites have been included.

POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
U.S. Senator	Ben Lujan (Santa Fe): Current US Senator - www.lujan.senate.gov	Larry Marker (Roswell): Entrepreneur - https://larrymarker.com
U.S. Senator	Matt Dodson (Farmington): Business Owner - https://mattodsonform.com	
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
U.S. Congressional District 2	Gabriel Vasquez (Las Cruces): Current Congressman – https://vasquez.house.gov	Gregory Cunningham (Las Cruces): Former Police Officer - https://www.cunninghamform.com
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
Governor	Sam Bregman (Albuquerque): Current Bernalillo County District Attorney - https://www.bregmanform.com	Greg Hull (Rio Rancho): Current Rio Rancho Mayor - https://gregghull.com
Governor	Deb Haaland (Albuquerque): Former Secretary of Interior - https://debhaaland.com	Duke Rodriguez (Albuquerque): Ultra Health CEO - https://runwithduke.com
Governor		Doug Turner (Albuquerque): Business Owner - www.turnerform.com
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
Lieutenant Governor	Maggie Toulouse Oliver (Albuquerque): Current NM Secretary of State - www.maggietoulouseoliver.com	A. Blair Dunn (Albuquerque): Attorney – No Website Found
Lieutenant Governor	Harold Pope Jr. (Albuquerque): Current State Senator – https://haroldpope.com	David Gallegos (Eunice): Current State Senator - www.gallegosform.com
Lieutenant Governor		Manuel Lardizabal (Albuquerque): Entrepreneur - www.manny4nm.com
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
Attorney General	Raul Torrez (Albuquerque): Current Attorney General - www.raultorrez.com	Samuel Kane, Sr. (Las Cruces): Attorney - https://samformnewmexico.org/
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
Secretary of State	Katharine Clark (Santa Fe): Current Santa Fe County Clerk - https://www.katharineclark.com	Ramona Goolsby (Albuquerque): Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors Member & Former Nurse – No Website Found
Secretary of State	Amanda Lopez Askin (Las Cruces): Current Dona Ana County Clerk - https://amandaform.com	
Secretary of State	Sonya Lee Smith (Albuquerque): Former Department of Veterans Services Secretary – No Website Found	
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
State Auditor	Joseph Maestas (Santa Fe): Current State Auditor – https://www.maestas4nm.net	Joshua James Ryan Lawrence (Albuquerque): No Information Found
State Treasurer	Laura Montoya (Albuquerque): Current State Treasurer - https://www.lauramontoya4nm.com	James Ellison (Albuquerque): Former Public Regulation Commissioner- https://ellisonform.com

POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
Commissioner of Public Lands	Matthew McQueen (Santa Fe): Current Representative – https://mcqueenformm.com	Michael Perry (Roswell): Former Assistant Commissioner & Current County Commissioner https://perry4nmland.com
Commissioner of Public Lands	Juan de Jesus Sanchez III (Belen): Former Political Director & Deputy Campaign Manager for Senator Martin Heinrich - https://juanfornewmexico.com	
Commissioner of Public Lands	Jonas Moya (Albuquerque): Former NM State Director, Farm Service Agency - https://www.jonasmoya.com	
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
State Representative	Raul Turrieta (Silver City): Current Chief Deputy in the Assessor’s Office - https://www.raulturrietaformm.com	Luis Terrazas (Silver City): Current Representative & Funeral Business - https://www.luisterrazas4nm.com
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
County Commissioner District 1	Andres Gomez (Santa Clara): Business owner – No Website Found	
County Commissioner District 1	Jenny Ferranti (Arenas Valley): Director Gila Regional Medical Center - https://www.jennyforgrantcounty.com	
County Commissioner District 1	Lonnie Sandoval (Silver City): Current Santa Clara Police Chief – No Website Found	
County Commissioner District 1	Patrick Snedeker (Silver City): Former Correctional Administrator – No website Found	
County Commissioner District 1	Simon Sotelo (Silver City): Community Organizer – No Website Found	
POSITION	DEMOCRAT BALLOT	REPUBLICAN BALLOT
County Commissioner District 2	Eloy Medina (Bayard): Current Commissioner for District 2 – No Website Found	
County Commissioner District 2	Gilbert Diaz Guadiana (Bayard): Cobre Consolidated Schools Board of Education Member – No Website Found	