

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 248

52nd Legislature, 2nd Session, 2016

Tracking Number: .203184.1

Short Title: Sufficient Alternative Voting Sites

Sponsor(s): Representatives James E. Smith and Tim D. Lewis

Analyst: Heidi L. Macdonald

Date: February 5, 2016

Bill Summary:

HB 248 provides procedures for establishment of sufficient alternate voting sites for early voting in school board elections. The bill also provides for notice of the location of alternate voting sites for early voting in school board elections. Additionally, it requires the county clerk, in consultation with the school board, to consolidate precincts for a school district election to ensure that voters have adequate access to alternative voting locations for early voting in the school district, taking into consideration population density and travel time to the voting location in the school district.

Fiscal Impact:

The bill does not contain an appropriation.

According to the Secretary of State (SOS), there are no anticipated costs associated with this bill.

At a Glance:

- This bill improves voter access in New Mexico by requiring school boards to establish convenient alternative early voting locations.

Substantive Issues:

HB 248 would increase opportunities for voters to vote early in school elections, which typically suffer from low-voter turnout. For instance:

- according to the US Census Bureau statistics for 2014, New Mexico had a population of 2,085,572; approximately 1,582,949, or 75.9 percent, were over the age of 18;
- in 2015, there were 1,291,272 registered voters in New Mexico;
- according to KRQE News, only 7,700 voters participated in the Albuquerque Public Schools election in 2015, approximately 2.9 percent of the 438,819 registered voters in Bernalillo County; and
- by comparison, in the 2014 midterm elections in New Mexico, 40.4 percent of registered voters participated, and 39.1 percent of registered voters participated in Bernalillo County.

Background:

In January 2016, controversy arose when the state's largest school district overlooked establishing an early voting site in the northwest portion of the school district earlier this year. According to the Albuquerque Journal, there was not a single early voting site in that particular portion of the school district, and this would have affected 113,000 eligible voters. This was also problematic because two early voting sites were established less than a mile apart from each other in another part of the school district. The issue was addressed by the school board, which voted to open two new early voting sites before the school election after consulting with the county clerk and staff from SOS.

Related Bills:

*HB 138 *Voting for Some 17 Year-Olds*

HB 143a *Change Dates for Certain Elections*

HJR 7 *School Elections with Other Elections, CA*