

Fiscal impact reports (FIRs) are prepared by the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) for standing finance committees of the Legislature. LFC does not assume responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Rep. Parajón/Sens. Hamblen and Charley **LAST UPDATED** _____
Voting Age for Local & Municipal **ORIGINAL DATE** 2/28/25
SHORT TITLE Elections **BILL** _____
NUMBER House Bill 526
ANALYST Hilla

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
SOS	No fiscal impact	No fiscal impact	\$120.0	\$120.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Conflicts with Senate Bill 218

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
Secretary of State (SOS)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From
Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD)
New Mexico Municipal League (NMML)
New Mexico County Clerks Affiliate

SUMMARY

Synopsis of House Bill 526

House Bill 526 (HB526) amends Section 1-4-2 NMSA 1978 regarding election registration. HB526 allows qualified state residents age 16 and older to register to vote and participate in the regular local election, municipal election, and special election.

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2026.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The Secretary of State (SOS) states that it would need \$120 thousand in one-time funding to modify three of its systems to accommodate the bill's passage.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico Constitution does not explicitly identify a voting age in Article VII, Section 1, where other qualifications for voters are identified. This section states “every person who is a qualified elector pursuant to the constitution and laws of the United States and a citizen thereof shall be qualified to vote in all elections in New Mexico, subject to residency and registration requirements provided by law, except as restricted by statute either by reason of a criminal conviction for a felony or by reason of mental incapacity.”

The 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution explicitly states that citizens of the United States who are 18 years of age or older shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of age for voting. However, this does not prohibit states from allowing younger individuals to vote in state or local elections, though the state’s elections processes have upheld voting standards for individuals of eighteen years of age and older.

The bill may warrant a constitutional amendment, granted that a “qualified resident” may be an individual under the age of 18 and, except for the age requirement, otherwise satisfies the state’s voter eligibility requirements as a qualified elector or a federal qualified elector, pursuant to 1-1-5.10 NMSA 1978. “Qualified electors,” as defined in 1-1-1 NMSA 1978, means any resident of the state who is qualified to vote and includes any qualified resident. As Article VII, Section 1, of the state’s constitution states, qualified electors shall be qualified to vote in all elections. This could be interpreted that HB526’s age requirements for becoming a qualified resident could conflict with the uniformity of “all elections” language in Article VII, Section 1.

SOS notes that current statute allows qualified residents to vote in the primary election if they are to turn 18 on or before the general election immediately succeeding that primary election. SOS adds that 16- and 17-year-olds are able to participate as election board members, which oversee and administer the electoral process at local levels.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

SOS states the bill conflicts with Senate Bill 218 (SB218), which seeks to consolidate all municipal elections to occur with the regular local election. Should SB218 pass, the municipal officer election referred to in HB526 would no longer exist.

EH/hj/hg