

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

Current and previously issued FIRs are available on the NM Legislative Website (www.nmlegis.gov) and may also be obtained from the LFC in Suite 101 of the State Capitol Building North.

FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/23/19

SPONSOR Soules LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE School Counselor Vote Registration Agents SB 410

ANALYST Eckberg

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY19	FY20	FY21	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		See Fiscal Implications				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to House Bill 84 and House Bill 86

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

New Mexico Attorney General (NMAG)

Public Education Department (PED)

Secretary of State (SOS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 410 requires high school guidance counselors to be registration agents and provides high school guidance counselor registration agents extra time to deliver or mail certificates of registration.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill does not include an appropriation. PED notes the bill would have an initial substantial fiscal impact on the department as they would need to modify the requirements for school counselor licenses and competencies to reflect the requirement for high school guidance counselors to become registration agents. Additionally, PED notes an immediate and future fiscal impact on public schools as they will have to provide oversight to ensure all high school guidance counselors become registration agents. SOS does not anticipate a fiscal impact.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Senate Bill 410 amends Section 1-4-49 NMSA 1978, Third Party Registration Agents, making high school guidance counselors registration agents to assist students to register to vote if they will be qualified electors at the next election. The high school guidance counselor registration agent would have one week, the requirement is 48 hours for other third-party registration agents, to deliver or mail a certificate of registration to the secretary of state or county clerk.

New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 6.63.6.9 outlines competencies for school counselors based on the American School Counseling Association national standards focused on the physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and vocational growth of students. School counselors in New Mexico have a variety of administrative duties, including scheduling; maintaining education records; analyzing transcripts; testing coordination; and planning and conducting activities focused on increasing career awareness. School counselors also prepare college recommendations, assist with financial aid applications, coordinate advance placement and college entrance exams, serve on Student Assistance Teams, participate on attendance initiatives and assist with dropout prevention. Additionally, school counselors are responsible for providing ongoing Next Step Plan and career guidance; and mental health services to students. PED notes the bill would further impact the administrative duties of school counselors and could impact the time school counselors spend on providing direct services to students.

PED further notes the current ratio for New Mexico school counselors is approximately 700 students per school counselor compared to the recommended ratio of 200 students per school counselor. The LFC program evaluation, *Cost-Effective Options for Increasing High School Graduation and Improving Adult Education*, found strong evidence of effectiveness in preventing dropouts and increasing graduation when counselors help students with specific academic issues, advocate for the student in the school system, connect students to other services, and/or address personal issues.

The most recent (2016) data from the United States Census Bureau indicates just over half, or 53.8 percent, of 18- to 24-year-olds eligible to vote in New Mexico are registered to vote. This bill would likely increase the number of young registered voters in New Mexico.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED notes because the bill identifies additional responsibilities for guidance counselors, PED's Licensure Bureau would have to initiate the rulemaking process to amend New Mexico Administrative Code. Additionally, PED notes they would need to collaborate with the New Mexico School Counselors Association and other experts, including the Secretary of State's staff, to develop training for school counselors related to becoming voter registration agents.

According to PED, Schools and districts would also need to meet prescribed timelines to ensure the guidance counselors delivered or mailed certificates of registration to the Secretary of State or county clerk within a week of completing each registration and districts may need to conduct an annual training of school counselors and schools may need to plan and implement training for school counselors focused on their duties as a voter registration agent.

SOS notes SOS and/or county clerks are required to provide training to all individuals as a part of their VRA registration process. Voter Registration applications contain personally identifiable

information (DOB, SSN, address) which makes the one week deadline problematic (currently VRA's have 48 hour deadline).

Requiring high school counselors to be registration agents and assist students with registration may serve to increase voter participation among young adults.

NE/gb