



LFC Requester: Liu

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
BILL ANALYSIS  
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

**SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

Check all that apply:

Original  Amendment   
Correction  Substitute

Date Prepared: 02/13 /25

Bill No: [SJR11](#)

**Agency Name and Code:** PED - 924

**Sponsor:** Trujillo/Armstrong/Gallegos

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**Short Title:** SCHOOL ELECTIONS TIMING, CA

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**SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT**

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

**APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
None	None	N/A	NFA

**REVENUE (dollars in thousands)**

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

**ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)**

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>	None	150.0	None	150.0	Nonrecurring	GF

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: [HB141](#), the current version of the General Appropriation Act of 2025, includes appropriations to the Secretary of State of approximately \$10.25 million to carry out elections and provide voter education and information on election law and government ethics; \$2.1 million to correct a deficiency in the 2024 election fund; \$5.5 million for the election fund in 2025; and \$1 million to purchase and implement an election management solution.

## **SECTION III: NARRATIVE**

### **BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis: Senate Joint Resolution 11 (SJR11) proposes to amend the New Mexico Constitution to strike the requirement that school elections be held at different times from partisan elections.

The proposed amendment would be on the ballot at the next general election in 2026 or at a special election prior to that date that may be called for that purpose.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The bill does not contain an appropriation.

In New Mexico, school districts are responsible for covering the costs of special elections they request, including expenses for ballot printing, mailing, staffing, and other administrative needs. These elections are conducted under the [Special Election Act](#). While county clerks typically administer these elections, the financial responsibility would lie with the requesting school district.

Per [Section 1-16-4 NMSA 1978](#), and the New Mexico Constitution, the Secretary of State is required to print samples of the text of each constitutional amendment, in Spanish and English, in a quantity equal to 10 percent of the registered voters in the state. The Secretary of State is also required to publish them once a week for four weeks preceding the election in newspapers in every county in the state. The estimated cost per constitutional amendment is \$125,000-\$150,000, depending on the size and number of ballots, and if additional ballot stations are needed.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

School districts would still be required to elect their officers in the regular local election in odd-numbered years; however, under SJR11, they would be allowed to put forth ballot questions to voters during a general election.

The New Mexico [Local Election Act](#), enacted in 2018, consolidated a number of local and municipal elections, including school elections, into one streamlined process. One of the aims of the act was to increase voter turnout. Prior to the enactment of the Local Election Act, school district elections were held on the first Tuesday in February of odd-numbered years, but that election strategy was found to result in little notice to voters, with very low voter turnout. Voting in school elections was found to be particularly low, with participation in Albuquerque Public Schools elections as low as 2.6 percent in 2015. Also in 2015, voter turnout in Albuquerque's municipal elections was a historically low 8.24 percent, down from 12 percent in 2011, and 20 percent in the 2013 mayoral race. Requiring school board elections to be held separately from partisan elections has also been criticized for [leading to lower voter turnout](#). Off-cycle elections, those not aligned with major statewide or national elections, often see significantly reduced participation. Studies have shown that voter turnout in off-cycle school board elections can be less than half of that in on-cycle elections. This reduced turnout may result in a less representative electorate, where special interest groups have a greater influence over election outcomes.

[Research](#) from the University of California, San Diego found low-turnout elections contribute to poorer outcomes for minorities, including uneven prioritization of public spending, as they typically do not represent the electorate as a whole, but are dominated by white, more-affluent, and older voters. [Center for American Progress](#) notes that, the average school board member is male, white, and high income with no children in school, and slightly less than one-third of school board members report that their occupation is education related. This suggests that many school boards are composed of people who are not representative of the community they serve, do not have children attending school in the district they represent, and do not have professional expertise in education. When voter turnout is lower, gaps in voter participation also tend to widen. For example, gaps in voter turnout by race, income, and age tend to be more pronounced in local elections than in presidential contests.

## **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

Political ideology of board members has been shown to have no link to organizational performance, even though key issues in education have recently been politicized. According to [Mark R. Ford](#), Associate Professor of Public Administration at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, “other board dynamics, including the presence of destructive personal conflict between board members, the ability of board members to agree on a common definition of accountability, and adherence to good governance practices such as regular strategic planning, influence board and organizational performance.”

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

None.

## **CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP**

Relates to:

- House Bill 71, Require Voter I.D., which proposes to require all voters present identification before voting.
- House Joint Resolution 6, Recall of Public Officers, CA, which proposes to amend Article 20 of the New Mexico Constitution to allow for the recall of elected officers of constitutionally created elected legislative and executive offices.
- House Joint Resolution 7, No County Sheriff Term Limits, CA, which proposes to amend Article 10, Section 2 of the New Mexico Constitution to allow county sheriffs to serve unlimited four-year terms.
- House Joint Resolution 10, Allow Voting with Felony Conviction, CA.
- Senate Bill 16, Non-Major Party Voters in Primary Elections, which proposes to permit voters not registered with a major political party to vote in a specified primary election.
- Senate Bill 85, Campaign Finance Changes, which proposes certain amendments to the Campaign Reporting Act.
- Senate Bill 218, Election Changes, which proposes to provide a process for protecting the identities of election workers, among other changes proposed to the Election Code.
- Senate Joint Resolution 9, Independent Redistricting Commission, CA, which proposes to amend the New Mexico Constitution to create an independent redistricting commission to develop and adopt redistricting plans for state legislative and other state offices.

**TECHNICAL ISSUES**

None.

**OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

None.

**ALTERNATIVES**

None.

**WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

None.

**AMENDMENTS**

None.