

Senate Bill

CREATING A REDISTRICTING ADVISORY COMMISSION

New Mexico Senators Jerry Ortiz y Pino and Mark Moores

What does this senate bill do?

Creates a seven-person Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission. The Commission would work with the professional services vendor, hired by the Legislative Council, to develop three to five sets of districts maps for the: US Congress; NM Public Education Commission; NM Senate; and NM House of Representatives. The Legislature shall vote for one of the sets of maps without amendment. The Commission will also be responsible for overseeing public hearings and public input for the redistricting process.

The appointments to the Commission will be made as follows, one each by the: Speaker of the House; House Minority Leader; Senate President Pro Tem; and the Senate Minority Leader. An additional three will be appointed by the NM Ethics Commission, one of whom shall be a retired NM Supreme Court Justice, who will act as chair.

This senate bill states that: “In compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act, governmental subdivisions (including tribal boundaries), contiguity, communities of interest, and compactness shall be considered in creating districts”. It also provides that certain factors shall not be considered when preparing redistricting plans. Specifically, it provides that: “Districts shall not be drawn to favor any political party, incumbent legislator, member of Congress, any other person or group, or for the purpose of augmenting or diluting the voting strength of a language or racial minority group.”

It reflects the recommendations of the twenty-five-person NM Redistricting Task Force convened by NM First in the fall of 2020. The task force was co-chaired by retired NM Supreme Court Justice Edward Chavez and retired NM Appeals Court Justice Roderick Kennedy.

Why do we need this Senate Bill?

The 2001 and 2011 redistricting cycles were decided in the New Mexico Supreme Court and cost the state more than \$7 million in legal fees. These public legal battles undermine the public confidence in the political process, leading to reduced public participation.

Fourteen states have created some form of independent redistricting commission and at least ten other states have put in place reforms that have made their redistricting process fairer and more transparent. New Mexico was one of the last states to create an ethics commission. We should not be one of the last to reform our redistricting process.

Note: The bill draft will be made publicly available once it is received from the Senators.

