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Secretary Toulouse Oliver Disappointed by Vetoes of Bills to Increase Transparency and Disclosure, and to Consolidate Elections

Victories for Blind Voters, Online Absentee Ballot Applications Celebrated

SANTA FE – On the last days of the signing period following the 2017 legislative session, Governor Susana Martinez vetoed multiple bipartisan, commonsense bills that would have increased transparency in the New Mexico campaign finance system, required additional disclosure for lobbyists and consolidated most local non-partisan elections to one day saving taxpayers money and simplifying the process for voters.

Early today, Governor Martinez vetoed Senate Bill 96, which would have required disclosure of independent expenditures made before a primary and general election. If SB 96 had been signed by the Governor, it would have brought New Mexico campaign laws into constitutional compliance following court decisions like *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, it would have added much needed language regarding disclosure on printed campaign literature, and it would have provided clarifying definitions to aid candidates on the campaign finance limitations and reporting requirements. Senate Bill 97, which was pocket vetoed by the Governor today, would have provided multiple meaningful fixes to state statutes that regulate publicly financed campaigns. Significantly, SB 97 would have reduced the amount of money disbursed to uncontested, publicly funded candidates resulting in a cost savings to the state while protecting the fund for future use.

“I’m very disappointed to see these bipartisan, commonsense transparency bills vetoed by Governor Martinez,” said Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver. “I’m left with no other choice then to go forward utilizing my rulemaking authority to address many of these much needed reforms before the next statewide election. Campaign finance reform and transparency continue to be a top priority for me and my office.”

The Governor also vetoed Senate Bill 393, which would have fixed a loophole in the current Lobbyist Regulation Act that currently does not require the reporting of expenditures made by lobbyists that are under one hundred dollars. Without this fix, the loophole allows for a significant number of unreported expenditures made by lobbyists in an attempt to influence decisions made by our elected officials.

Additionally, House Bill 174, The Local Elections Act, was pocket vetoed today by the Governor. If enacted, HB 174 would have consolidated non-partisan elections that currently occur throughout the year to a single day in November each odd numbered year. Currently, separate elections for school districts, special hospital districts, community college districts, technical and vocational institute districts, learning center districts, arroyo flood control districts, special zoning districts, and water and sanitation districts are held on different dates throughout the year.

“The Local Election Act was really about putting the voters first,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “Consolidated elections would have made it easier for voters to follow when elections are happening and to be informed about the candidates and issues on the ballot. It would have led to much greater

voter participation in these elections. I strongly believe that consolidating these non-partisan elections would provide real savings for the taxpayers and boost voter turnout.”

SB 96, SB 97, SB 393 and HB 174 all received broad bipartisan support in the both chambers of the legislature before being vetoed by Governor Martinez.

Despite these setbacks, there were some positive results from the 2017 legislative session. Yesterday, Governor Martinez signed House Bill 98, which will let the Secretary of State implement new technology and procedures to provide blind and visually impaired voters a means to independently cast an absentee paper ballot. HB 98 also allows voters to electronically submit requests for absentee ballots through the Secretary of State’s website.

Finally, successfully included in House Bill 2 are a number of supplemental appropriations requested by the Secretary of State’s office to pay outstanding bills in the current year including \$117,000 to help pay an overdue court settlement that was the result of a lawsuit filed by ACLU New Mexico against former Secretary of State Dianna Duran for her failure to comply with the Inspection of Public Records Act. The Secretary of State’s office was also able to secure the \$36,000 needed to reimburse the offices of both the Sandoval County Clerk and the Bernalillo County Clerk for expenses incurred during their statutorily mandated automatic recounts following the 2016 general election.

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