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SOS Toulouse Oliver Releases Draft Absentee Voting Rule and Announces Public Input Process

All New Mexicans Invited to Provide Input on New Rule

SANTA FE – New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver [released a draft rule on absentee voting](#) to make voting more accessible for blind and visually impaired voters, enhance the absentee voting process for domestic absentee voters and active duty military personnel, provide guidance to local election officials and poll workers on a wide range of absentee voting procedures, and bring uniformity to absentee and early voting processes statewide. If adopted, the draft rule would repeal and replace the state’s current Absentee Rule. In addition, Secretary Toulouse Oliver announced a robust public input and official written comment process to give New Mexicans an opportunity to weigh in on the new rule.

“All voters deserve privacy when casting their ballot, and this rule – in keeping with a new state law passed last year to this effect - will enable blind and visually impaired voters to vote independently using their own technology,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “This rule also acknowledges that absentee voting has evolved in recent years, and provides guidance to help local election officials issue and process absentee ballots more accurately and efficiently. I believe these enhancements will make the absentee voting process more fair and accessible for all New Mexico voters, including our men and women in uniform or overseas.”

In 2017, the New Mexico Legislature passed legislation pushed by Secretary Toulouse Oliver to make voting more accessible for blind and visually impaired voters. Since that time, Secretary Toulouse Oliver has worked with advocacy groups, including the National Federation of the Blind-New Mexico and the New Mexico Commission for the Blind to develop new materials that will allow blind and visually impaired voters to vote absentee in the comfort of their own homes using their own non-visual or low-vision technology. The new draft rule would provide procedures on how blind and visually impaired voters can request a ballot by email, cast their vote, and return the ballot to their county clerk.

The draft rule would also make improvements to the application of the Uniform and Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA), by clarifying the process of requesting and submitting an absentee ballot for New Mexicans serving in the military, living overseas, or working as emergency responders. The rule outlines procedures to bring uniformity as to how county clerks issue, receive, and tally absentee ballots, ensuring accurate absentee results. Finally, the draft rule also codifies many early and absentee voting best practices so there is a consistent process statewide.

New Mexicans wishing to provide public input on the draft rule may attend a public hearing in Santa Fe at the State Capitol Building, 490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 321, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501, on March 19, 2018, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (MDT). Interested parties may provide official written comment on this draft rule by writing to Rebecca Martinez, Elections Administrator, New Mexico Secretary of State, 325 Don Gaspar Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501, Suite 300. Alternatively, interested parties may comment by sending an email to sos.rules@state.nm.us, or fax to (505) 827-8081. All written comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. (MDT) Friday, March 16, 2018.

Learn more about the draft absentee rule [here](#).

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