

Article #2:

SAME-DAY VOTER REGISTRATION in NEW MEXICO – Part 2

House Republicans added the requirement for some form of identification to be provided by a person seeking to register and then immediately vote.

House Republicans also added additional amendments to address other potentially problematic issues created by the new same-day voter registration law. One of those addresses the immediate, continuous accuracy of the voter file:

REAL-TIME ACCESS TO THE VOTER FILE AND PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

The 3rd House Floor Amendment presented by the Republicans provides:

“If an early voting site or polling place does not have real-time access to the statewide electronic voter file, a voter desiring to update an existing certificate of registration or to register to vote shall be issued a provisional ballot.”

This section is now codified as NMSA 1-4-5.7 (H).

This amendment was designed to provide at least some minimal protection against potential opportunities for fraud created by same-day voter registration. For example, under current practice, if a voter appears at an early voting site (or in-person absentee) and votes, he or she will be checked off the county’s list in the computer. That prevents the voter from going to another early voting location and voting a second time.

However, that system doesn’t allow the poll worker to look at voting records from other counties, because under current law—with the 28-day registration cutoff in place—it has not been necessary.

But with the adoption of same-day voter registration, the polling place will need to access not just the county voter file, but the entire statewide voter file, in real time, to ensure that double voting doesn’t occur.

Some of the most strenuous objections to the same-day voter registration bill, expressed by county clerks, were based on the already-known limitations in the capabilities of the current statewide voter file management system. Understanding the existing limitations of the system, the amendment helps avoid at least one potential problem.