



Latino Policy & Politics Initiative  
**Voting Rights  
Project**



**CENTER FOR  
SOCIAL POLICY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 18, 2020

**MEDIA CONTACT**

Eliza Moreno

E: [lppipress@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:lppipress@luskin.ucla.edu)

P: 310-487-9815

**COALITION OF ACADEMICS PUBLISH REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS  
NECESSARY TO FIX NEW MEXICO'S ELECTION LAWS**

*The report, published in partnership between the UCLA Voting Rights Project and the University of New Mexico's Center for Social Policy, is an effort to identify shortcomings in New Mexico election law and protect the state's voters in future elections.*

The report, "*New Mexico Vote-By-Mail: Matters of the Primary and State Election Laws*," examines the 2020 New Mexico Primary Election, the process of voting by mail in the state, and policy solutions to ensure that voters are provided equitable access to the ballot box in future elections.

New Mexico's record turnout during its Primary Election was a triumph of the state's efforts to enable voting during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report, however, identifies deficiencies in New Mexico's election laws and logistical issues associated with scaling up mail voting during a pandemic that disenfranchised voters in the state. The issues identified in the report include failures to receive absentee ballots and late absentee ballot submission, a lack of opportunity to correct rejected ballots in state election law, and late reporting of election results by several counties. Most importantly, due to travel restrictions on Tribal lands and issues associated with access to mail voting, New Mexico's current election laws disproportionately disenfranchise Native American voters during the COVID-19 crises. If left uncorrected, these issues are cause for concern for the 2020 General Election and beyond.

Dr. Gabriel Sanchez remarked: "[w]e hope that the state legislature is able to address the limitations in New Mexico's election laws prior to the November election when we will likely see record turnout. Our state's Native American population has been hit the hardest of any racial group in New Mexico by COVID-19. We should do all that is possible to ensure that there are no additional hurdles for these communities to be able to cast their ballot in November like those they faced in the Primary." New Mexico is holding a special legislative session to address the state budget and other matters beginning today, June 18, 2020.

“New Mexico has an opportunity to ensure that vulnerable communities are not disenfranchised during the COVID-19 crisis. As we saw in the primary, Native communities in particular, have had a burden placed on their right to vote. It is paramount that the Legislature take these policy recommendations seriously.” said Dr. Matt Barreto. Barreto and Sanchez have previously served as expert witnesses on behalf of Native American communities in voting rights lawsuits and are very familiar with the issues at hand.

The UCLA Voting Rights Project, alongside The University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy and the Union of Concerned Scientists, released [an analysis on H.R. 1](#) on April 9 that advocated for improvements to H.R. 1, the first bill proposed by the 116th Congress that, although expands access to the voting franchise, falls short in providing equitable access to vote-by-mail.

### **About the UCLA Voting Rights Project**

The UCLA Voting Rights Project (VRP) is the marquee advocacy project of the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI) at the University of California, Los Angeles and is focused on voting rights litigation, research, policy and training. The UCLA Voting Rights Project addresses monumental and overlooked gaps in the field of voting rights—how to train young lawyers and researchers, support the development of new legal and methodological theories for voting rights cases, and how to advance policy work to ensure that there is a new generation of leaders who are pursuing efforts to guarantee all citizens have equal and fair access to our democracy. The project was founded by Chad W. Dunn, J.D. and Matt Barreto, Ph.D. The UCLA Voting Rights Project is located within the Luskin School of Public Affairs.

To learn more about the UCLA Voting Rights Project, please visit:  
<https://latino.ucla.edu/votingrights>.

### **About UNM’s Center for Social Policy**

UNM’s Center for Social Policy (CSP) mission is to increase the diversity of those with formal training in the fields of economics, political science and sociology who engage in applied social policy research. The CSP is overseen by Dr. Gabriel Sanchez. The CSP is home to the Native American Budget and Policy Institute, a group whose work focuses on improving social outcomes for Tribal communities in New Mexico as well as nationally.

To learn more about the work of UNM’s Center for Social Policy and Native American Budget and Policy Institute, please visit:

<http://csp.unm.edu/>

<https://nabpi.unm.edu>