



PO Box 95735
Albuquerque, NM 87199
(505) 836-4223

Press Release – for Immediate Release

Contact: Larry Sonntag
(505) 366-8150

Referendum process on six bills dealing with parental rights, freedom of speech and election integrity draws statewide and national support.

New Mexico (June 13, 2023). The Referendum Project is gaining great momentum. The response of New Mexicans across the state to exercise their rights under the state constitution has been overwhelmingly positive.

The New Mexico Constitution provides an opportunity for New Mexicans to “*disapprove, suspend, or annul any law enacted by the legislature.*” (NM Constitution Article IV, Section 1.) Better Together New Mexico (BTNM) is providing statewide support to leaders in every county who are gathering signatures. They want to educate New Mexicans about six of the worst bills ever passed and have them placed on the 2024 ballot for the voters to decide.

Weighing in on this unprecedented project are large national corporations, national media, and religious leaders from around the state and country. People from all political parties and walks of life feel the legislature and governor did not listen to them. During the legislative process, BTNM had over 450,000 emails and phone calls to legislators and the governor in opposition to these six laws.

Very late in the process, the Secretary of State sent the “official example” of the petition and has subsequently stated the form of the petition “is deemed technically accurate...”. Her claims that the petitions are invalid are inaccurate and yet another attempt to squash the voice of New Mexicans.

The SOS contends she has the authority to change the legislative designation of each of the six laws making them ineligible for the referendum process. She does not have this authority. The constitution exempts laws designated as “providing for the preservation of the public peace, health or safety.” That designation can only be made by the legislature. If the legislature wanted this designation, the bill would have required the approval of two-thirds of each legislative chamber, and it would have to contain an emergency clause requiring that it go into effect immediately. Neither of these things occurred which means none of these laws were passed for the preservation of public peace, health, or safety.

Last week the NM SOS claimed Judge James A. Noel’s decision presented a “setback” for the coalition. Judge Noel did not “rule” on anything. The case had to be reopened and a complaint was filed with the Judicial Standards Committee on Friday, June 9, 2023. The SOS also fails to mention there are five other cases filed across the state as well as an injunction.

The nonpartisan statewide coalition tried earnestly to work with county clerks across the state. Part of the requirement in filing referendum petitions is turning in certified voter rolls, printed and electronic, with the petitions. Certified letters were sent to each clerk on May 5th, informing them the coalition would be requesting the needed documents. In yet another attempt to impede the rights of New Mexicans, however, the Secretary of State told the county's elected officials not to comply with the request. This has further hampered our efforts but will not stop us.

"It is a shame the SOS feels entitled to tell local elected officials within our counties what they can and cannot do", said Carla Sonntag, CEO, Better Together New Mexico.

There were ethics complaints filed Monday against the Secretary of State and the Attorney General with the New Mexico State Ethics Commission.

The six laws are scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2023. The coalition desired to stop them from going into effect as well as having the laws placed on the 2024 ballot for consideration by voters. The SOS continues to create roadblocks for New Mexicans to exercise their rights under our state constitution. The people of this state, however, will not be deterred.

The educational opportunity for New Mexico voters to fully understand the power and intent of some of the state's legislative leaders and the governor has been priceless. People are outraged to learn what happened during the last legislative session and are stepping up to help. We have countless people who refuse to give up on this state.

Carla Sonntag stated, "We won't stop gathering petition signatures until every concerned New Mexican has the opportunity to fully understand what has happened to their rights and has the opportunity to sign the petition. And in November 2024, they will have the right to vote on these laws that have a profound impact on our children, families, and communities."

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Better Together New Mexico is a statewide nonpartisan alliance of people seeking a better path forward for our state. For more information, please visit our website at www.bettertogethernewmexico.org.

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FOLLOW-UP Dated June 15, 2023

The press release was accurate at the time it was published. Subsequently, we learned the Sandoval County case has been dismissed. While there could be a filing for a Motion to Reconsider, that decision has not been made.

As stated, there are five other similar cases filed in other jurisdictions.