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Electoral College or the National Popular Vote

The Center for the Study of Voting, Elections and Democracy at the University of New Mexico citizen's panel conducts its final public meeting on October 28th in Las Cruces. Goals are to involve public and advise elected officials on this important and timely national issue

ALBUQUERQUE, NM—After two successful meetings in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, the C-SVED Citizens Panel comes to Las Cruces, to discuss potential changes in the way the United States elects its President.

Four times in our history, the winner of the popular vote lost the Electoral College. Across the country a national popular vote movement has amassed 49% of the electoral votes it needs to change the method of electing Presidents. Dozens of states are considering this proposal and New Mexico must be heard in this important, national debate.

UNM C-SVED has organized a panel of over 20 New Mexico election leaders, including County Clerks, representatives of the New Mexico Secretary of State, Legislators, business people, students, and community activists to analyze this issue and present its conclusions on what potential changes mean for New Mexico and our nation.

The panel is bipartisan. It includes Republicans such as New Mexico Republican Party Attorney Paul Kienzle, Lincoln County Clerk Rhonda Burrows, and Bobbie Scherer of Secretary of State Diana Duran's Office. Democrats on the panel include Bernalillo County Clerk Maggie Toulouse Oliver, Santa Fe County Clerk, Valerie Espinoza and Dona Ana County Clerk Lynn Ellins. Also, citizen groups are represented on the panel including Steve Allen of *Common Cause*, Paul Stokes of *United Voters of NM*, and several representatives of the *League of Women Voters*.

Public officials, who may consider statutory changes to the state election code, have been active in the process. At the last meeting, Secretary of State Dianna Duran, Senators Rod Adair and Peter Wirth, and Representatives Nate Gentry and David Doyle joined the discussion. Invitees to the October 28th meeting include Senators Mary Kay Papen, Stephen Fischmann, and Mary Jane Garcia, and Representatives Mary Helen Garcia, Joni Gutierrez, and Antonio Lujan.

"The Constitution leaves it to the individual states to determine how to award its electoral votes for president" said Prof. Lonna Atkeson, Director of C-SVED. "Our Citizen panel has examined the history and purpose of the Electoral College. In our final meeting, I look forward to our panel focusing on questions related to representation, how the process influences voters and how those would change under a national popular vote system."

The Las Cruces meeting will be held on October 28 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM at the Dona Ana County Clerk's Office at the Government Center at 845 N. Motel Blvd. The media and the public are encouraged to attend the meeting.

After the conclusion of its 3rd meeting, UNM C-SVED will prepare a summary of the panel's findings and present it to the New Mexico Secretary of State, who is charged with reviewing the national popular vote and the current system and then report her findings to the New Mexico Legislature. It will also present its findings to the public and the media.

Direct any questions to Professor Lonna Atkeson (phone: (505)-660-8976, email: atkeson@unm.edu).