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New Mexico First Reconvenes Redistricting Task Force

New Mexico First officially launched the second phase of the NM Redistricting Task Force, a statewide, citizen-led group working to strengthen the transparency, accountability, and fairness of political redistricting. Cedric Page of the Santa Fe Branch of the NAACP and Tom Garrity of The Garrity Group Public Relations co-chair the task force.

At the virtual relaunch of the task force on April 20, 2022, Page thanked Justice Ed Chavez and Judge Roderick Kennedy, the co-chairs of the previous iteration of the group for their leadership and expertise on redistricting. "They have wisely guided the process and we are ready to meet the challenges of public education and participation in future redistricting efforts." Page continued, "I'm sure with your steadfast commitment we will make significant progress toward our goals."

"The work of the original New Mexico Redistricting Task Force set the table for important discussions that resulted in meaningful statewide community engagement," says Garrity. "As a result of Justice Chavez, Judge Kennedy and the task force members, residents had a platform to share their insights, suggestions and concerns as a part of the redistricting process. That was a win!"

Redistricting takes place every decade in concert with the census and is the way new district boundaries are decided for congressional and state legislative districts, among others. In 2020, the task force met to study redistricting and released a report with 18 consensus-based recommendations, which can be accessed at <https://nmfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/230/2021/03/Good-Governance-Redistricting-Taskforce-Recommendations-Report-2020.pdf>. This second phase will examine which recommendations were addressed, which unmet recommendations ought to be prioritized for the 2023 legislative session, and whether additional recommendations are warranted.

Task Force members represent diverse cultural groups, geographic locations, and political perspectives.

Members of the Redistricting Task force are: Merritt Allen (Tijeras); David Buchholtz, Rodey Law Firm (Albuquerque); Ahtza Chavez, NAVA Education Project (Albuquerque); N.M State Representative Rebecca Dow, (T or C); N.M. State Representative Kelly Fajardo (Los Lunas); Jeremy Farris, NM Ethics Commission (Albuquerque); N.M. State Representative Natalie Figueroa (Albuquerque); Tom Garrity, The Garrity Group PR Firm, (Albuquerque); Leonard Gorman, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (Navajo Nation); C. Earl Greer, NM Farm and Livestock Bureau (Elephant Butte); Anita Hand, Catron County Commission (Datil); Mario Jimenez III, Common Cause NM (Santa Fe); Carmen Lopez, State Innovation Exchange (Santa Fe); Dick Mason, League of Women Voters (Santa Fe); N.M. State Senator Mark Moores (Albuquerque); N.M State Senator Bill O'Neill (Albuquerque); N.M. State Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino (Albuquerque); Cedric Page, Santa Fe Branch NAACP (Santa Fe); N.M. State Representative Shannon Pinto (Tohatchi); Maureen Skowran, TargetSmart (Albuquerque); Sandra Taylor-Sawyer, Dream Givers LLC (Clovis); N.M. State Representative Jim Townsend (Artesia).

Danielle Gonzales, Executive Director of New Mexico First, described the potential of the task force. "New Mexicans have the opportunity to learn from each other, from promising practice in other states, and to elevate redistricting processes that ensure fair representation and best serve our democracy." Interested parties may observe task force meetings and participate in public comment.

The Redistricting Task Force is funded by a grant from the Thornburg Foundation.

New Mexico First builds consensus on critical issues facing our state and communities and leads positive policy change through deliberative town halls, forums, and nonpartisan work on education, the economy, healthcare, natural resources, and good governance. www.nmfirst.org

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