



## SJR 8 Salaries for Public Officials

**Summary:** SJR 8, sponsored by Senators Daniel Ivey-Soto and Bobby Gonzales, would put a Constitutional Amendment on the ballot to amend the NM Constitution to provide the State Ethics Commission authority to review and establish salaries every two years for all elected state officials. Passing SJR 8 and achieving the approval of the voters would then allow the Ethics Commission to set salaries for legislators and their staff. New Mexico is the last unpaid legislature in the country. This would bill address a number of challenges outlined below.

**History:** Sen. Ivey-Soto introduced similar legislation during the 2021 Session, SJR 4, which passed in the Senate Rules Committee but died in Senate Judiciary.

### Why SJR 8 Is Good for NM

- **Work Demands on Legislators Warrant a Salary.** Legislators make incredible sacrifices to manage 30 and 60-day sessions in alternate years, in addition to an endless number of 3-day Interim Committee hearings between sessions that can be held hundreds of miles from their homes and their constituents.
- **More Time is Necessary to Address Complex Legislative Issues.** It is a challenge for our legislators to be prepared on hundreds of bills in a short session and over a thousand bills in a long session. With such short sessions, expedience and the rush to pass legislation trumps due deliberation. There is simply too much important work to be done in too short a time. To perform their responsibilities fully while having to earn a living is not realistic.
- **Our Legislature Does Not Represent Most New Mexicans and Their Life Experience.** When you don't pay legislators, you wind up with representatives who are either retired, wealthy, or work in professions with flexibility in scheduling their work, i.e., only 10% of the New Mexico population. As a result, the lawmakers making decisions about the future of New Mexico do not look like or represent the vast majority of New Mexicans. If most of our elected officials come from privilege and do not have to collaborate with other legislators who have faced more life challenges, then the public debate suffers and bills that would more authentically address the needs of the working poor will never advance with the urgency required.
- **Paid Industry Lobbyists Wield Too Much Influence.** Increasing the challenge faced by our legislators is the absence of funding to pay staff to review legislation and communicate with constituents. Often this forces legislators to rely on "briefs" provided to them by paid lobbyists who could be lobbyists from any side of an issue: Common Cause or NM Voices for Children, or from NM Oil & Gas Association, PNM, or the NRA. That is an injustice to both those elected and to New Mexicans.

### Supporting Organizations

- Common Cause
- League of Women Voters, NM

**Building grassroots power to successfully advocate for social, racial, environmental, and economic justice.**

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