

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 21, 2017**

Contact: Joey Keefe (505) 469-2783

## **Toulouse Oliver, Stakeholders Discuss Implementation of New Procedures to Aid Visually Impaired Voters**

SANTA FE – New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver met with various stakeholders at the New Mexico State Capitol yesterday to begin implementing a new law designed to make voting more accessible to blind and visually impaired voters. Passed into law during the 2017 legislative session, House Bill 98 requires the Secretary of State to establish procedures to make absentee voting more accessible to blind and visually impaired voters while bringing a greater sense of independence and secrecy to this community when voting by absentee ballot.

“All voters deserve fair and equal access to the ballot box,” said Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver. “We still have work to do, but it is my hope that these new rules will get us closer to a place where eligible voters who are visually impaired can cast their vote through a more independent process.”

State Representative Tomás Salazar and State Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto co-sponsored the bill, which passed both chambers with strong bipartisan support and was signed into law by Governor Susana Martinez.

“HB 98 is a good first step as we work toward solutions that will enable blind and low vision voters to cast a ballot independently while at the same time protecting their right to secrecy,” said Greg Trapp, Executive Director of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind. “I look forward to the full implementation of these new requirements so visually impaired voters will be more encouraged to exercise their right to vote with confidence.”

Speaking on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind, Curtis Chong added, “we are very excited that meetings have begun to implement HB 98, and we are pleased to have such a positive working relationship with the Secretary of State as we all work together to provide full access to the printed ballot by people who are blind or visually impaired.”

The rollout process for the new requirements will include opportunities for blind and visually impaired voters to test the new system, which the Secretary of State expects to go live statewide in time for the 2018 Primary Election next June.

###

Follow Secretary Toulouse Oliver on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).