



Monthly Newsletter
News current as of July 15, 2026

JULY 2026

President's Corner

The New Mexico Black Caucus is committed to advancing the political, social, and economic interests of African American communities throughout the State of New Mexico. Pursuant to our Bylaws, the Caucus is to remain informed and engaged on local, state, and national issues that affect African American communities; communicate those concerns to the Democratic Party of New Mexico; and work collaboratively, when appropriate, to seek meaningful solutions that improve the well-being, representation, and civic participation of African Americans across the state.



One issue that the Caucus should be concerned about and focused on is the ruling issued by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 24, 2026. In a 6-3 decision, the Court cleared the way to end humanitarian protections for Haitian immigrants. Accordingly, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and associated deportation protections for the majority of the over 350,000 Haitian immigrants in the U.S. are scheduled to expire on July 24, 2026. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established this timeline after decision by the Supreme Court.

One June 25, 2026, just one day after the ruling by the Supreme Court, the **Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2026 was introduced in Congress** by Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson (D-FL) and currently has 11 co-sponsors. This legislation seeks to establish a direct pathway to legal permanent residency for eligible Haitian nationals who have lived and worked under temporary protections. The vast majority of the Haitian diaspora in the United States is concentrated in states like Florida, New York, and New Jersey. In New Mexico, Haitians make up less than 0.1% of the overall population. On the Senate side, **S. 4814**, has been introduced by Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts and currently has 19 cosponsors. The Senate legislation would require the Secretary of Homeland Security to designate Haiti for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). If enacted, the legislation would provide a three-year TPS designation for eligible Haitians.

The Haitian migration crisis has been driven by a combination of compounding disasters—including a devastating earthquake in 2010 and ongoing gang violence. The few Haitian residents in the state are mostly dispersed across urban areas like Albuquerque, Santa Fe, or Las Cruces and have been strong contributors to the well-being of New Mexico. As a Caucus, we should help the Haitian immigrants in our state by urging our Congressional Delegation to support the passage of the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2026 and the passage of S. 4814. Write a letter, make a phone call, encourage others to participate in advocacy for the passage of these legislative initiatives. Please write your letter of support and engage in this advocacy immediately.

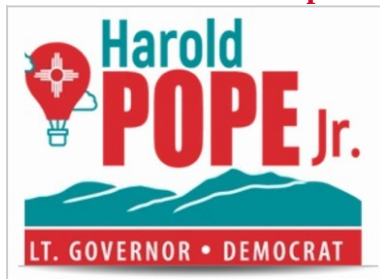
Pamela Herndon — President

Caucus Endorses Sen. Harold Pope for Lt. Governor — July 14 Update from President Herndon

President Herndon thanked all members who completed the endorsement survey. A majority of those who responded voted in favor of the Black Caucus publicly supporting **Senator Harold Pope as the Democratic candidate for Lt. Governor.**

President Herndon released a statement announcing the New Mexico Democratic Black Caucus's support for Senator Pope. *Background on the Lt. Governor vacancy and the SCC selection process is in New Mexico Democratic Party News.*

The New Mexico Democratic Black Caucus is proud to endorse our member



Candidate Endorsement Poll — July 10 - Update from President Herndon

After the Black Caucus formed in 2014, the decision was made that the Caucus would not endorse candidates in a Democratic Contested Primary or a contested Special Election where a Democratic Candidate had to be selected. Endorsements were causing significant strife within the Caucus.

On July 10, 2026, President Pamela Herndon polled members on whether the Caucus should endorse candidates in contested Democratic elections. The question arose after a few members expressed interest in endorsing a candidate in the Democratic contested Lt. Governor's race.

A majority of the members who completed the survey voted to temporarily suspend the current policy and endorse a candidate in the contested Lt. Governor race. The Caucus must now make a decision if it would like to permanently suspend the policy about endorsing Democratic candidates in a contested election..

Officer Elections & Open Positions — July 1 Update from President Herndon

Key points from the President's update:

- **Bylaws & elections.** The New Mexico Black Caucus was established in 2014. The Bylaws were amended in 2019 to reflect and confirm that the election for Caucus officers were to occur in odd numbered years for a two year term to align with the elections of the Democratic Party of New Mexico.
- **Next election — July 2027.** The next election of officers is scheduled for July 2027. At that election the Caucus also selects its representatives to the State Central Committee.

The President is working to fill several vacant positions in the Caucus in advance of the July 2027 election:

- **Members have stepped forward to volunteer for appointments to fill the following positions:**
 - Sonya Smith - 2nd Vice-President
 - Haniff Sealy - Secretary and editor of the monthly newsletters
 - Amina Everett - Assistant Treasurer
 - Sherri Burr - Historian.
- **Positions still to be filled are the following:** Assistant Secretary and Parliamentarian. Interested members should contact the President.
- **Further details at the Thursday, July 23 monthly meeting.**

1st Vice-President's Corner

Program & Planning Committee — Chaired by 1st Vice-President Patricia French

The Program & Planning Committee will begin meeting via Zoom to develop a program initiative to present at the Caucus meeting in August. On the committee's agenda:

- **Bring guest speakers to our Caucus meetings.** Reach out to legislators, community leaders and candidates to invite them to our Caucus meetings as guest speakers.
- **Civic education in plain language.** Planning sessions on elections, ballot initiatives, and the upcoming 60-day session — to educate members on important civic engagement matters.
- **Get Out the Vote.** Planning regular updates on political races, issues, and deadlines affecting the African American Community in New Mexico — so you and your family are fully informed when you vote.



Patricia French — 1st Vice-President

Have a program idea — or want to help plan? The Program Committee is looking for members, and wants to hear from you.

Committee meeting date and Zoom link coming soon.

2nd Vice-President's Corner

Democratic Party Western Region Black Caucus Update

State caucuses are urged to keep up strong voter registration and partnerships; Black voters remain a core strength of the Democratic Party. New Mexico and Arizona are under consideration for becoming an early voting pre-designation state in the Western Region in the 2028 presidential election. The Democratic Party is deciding which states vote early in the 2028 presidential primary calendar. An earlier slot would give New Mexico voters a bigger voice in choosing the nominee establishing issues, and bringing candidates, attention, and resources to our state.

Save the dates:

- **Congressional Black Caucus Foundation 55th Annual Legislative Conference** — Washington, D.C., September 16–20, 2026
- **Western Regional Black Caucus Conference** — Phoenix, October 2–4, 2026



Sonya Smith — 2nd Vice-President

Caucus Monthly Meetings — Fourth Thursdays, 7:00 PM via Zoom

Thursday, July 23, 2026 — 7:00 PM

Thursday, August 27, 2026 — 7:00 PM

Thursday, September 24, 2026 — 7:00 PM

Deb Haaland Wins the Democratic Nomination for Governor

Deb Haaland won the Democratic nomination for Governor on June 2, defeating Bernalillo County District Attorney Sam Bregman. She faces Republican Gregg Hull in November.

Filling the Lieutenant Governor Vacancy

Maggie Toulouse Oliver won the nomination for Lieutenant Governor but suspended her campaign on June 18 for health reasons, leaving a vacancy on the November ballot. Under state law and Democratic Party of New Mexico (DPNM) rules, the party's **State Central Committee (SCC)** will choose a replacement nominee. Key dates (subject to change):

- **July 12** — Virtual candidate forum held, hosted by Bernalillo County Ward 11B — featuring Sen. Harold Pope Jr. and Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard, with opening remarks by Lt. Governor Howie Morales
- **July 25** — SCC meeting (virtual); online voting opens afterward
- **July 28** — Voting closes at 5:00 p.m.
- **July 29** — Results announced; nominee filed with the Secretary of State

Gubernatorial nominee **Deb Haaland** has endorsed Land Commissioner **Stephanie Garcia Richard** for the replacement nomination. Among caucus members who entered the process, **Sen. Harold Pope** — New Mexico's first Black state senator — remains a candidate, while **Sonya Smith** has withdrawn from the race.



Caucus member Sen. Harold Pope remains a candidate to fill the Lieutenant Governor vacancy.

If you serve on the SCC, watch for the official call and voting instructions from DPNM. More at nmdemocrats.org.

INTERIM COMMITTEE NEWS

2026 Interim — Problems the Committees Are Studying

Between legislative sessions, New Mexico’s interim committees are examining problems that will shape the 2027 legislative session. Below are some of the issues that are drawing the attention of the Interim Committees. Several of the issues align with the priorities of the Black Caucus, such as access to quality affordable healthcare, behavioral health, education, and access to justice.

Legislative Health & Human Services

- **Disconnected youth fall through the cracks.** Agencies are not sharing information and records, so a young person (ages 16–24) reached by one program is not being supported by another that could help in supporting the youth. There are hundreds of disconnected youth in New Mexico. However, a \$16-million-plus state data system is not connecting these youth to services and cannot provide a reliable number to indicate how many youth are disconnected.
- **Access to housing is being used to pressure outpatient treatment.** Testimony presented before an Interim Committee flagged arrangements that tie a person’s access to housing contingent upon enrolling in a specific Medicaid-funded outpatient program — this pressure affects individuals facing mental illness, addiction, or homelessness hardest. A state rule bans such prohibitions, but it is not being enforced.
- **Medicaid care denials go unwatched.** In 2021, Medicaid plans denied roughly 1 in 5 prior-authorization requests, and about 45% of prescription-drug requests — with weaker public oversight than commercial plans. Medicaid covers about 40% of New Mexicans.

Legislative Finance Committee

- **\$2.6 billion, barely more class time.** Since 2018 the state has spent \$2.6 billion to lengthen the school year, yet the average student gains only about three more days — partly because some four-day-week districts count Fridays as “extra” learning days.
- **Nothing set aside for disasters.** New Mexico pays for wildfires and floods after the fact — 360 emergency orders and \$257.7 million in FY2025 — with no standing disaster reserve fund budgeted in advance.
- **A looming \$173 million SNAP bill.** New Mexico’s SNAP payment-error rate is among the worst in the nation; a new federal law will charge high-error states starting in 2028, exposing the state to as much as \$173 million a year. SNAP feeds 21% of New Mexicans.

Courts, Corrections & Justice

- **Local crime-reduction grants run dry.** Requests ran about three times the money available — over \$1 million sought for FY2027, but only \$310,640 awarded, all from base budget. The grants seed pretrial, re-entry, and treatment-court pilots statewide.
- **Jails have become behavioral-health providers.** Bookings at Albuquerque’s Metropolitan Detention Center rose about 72% in five years, and its re-entry center serves roughly 13,000 people a year from 3,000 square feet — on unstable, one-time funding.
- **Too few public defenders.** New Mexico has about one-third of the public defenders its caseload requires, with an attorney vacancy rate above 21% — raising a Sixth Amendment risk of inadequate counsel.

How You Can Engage

These committees are shaping the bills the Legislature will vote on in 2027. Your voice belongs in the room — here’s how to put it there.

- **Attend or watch a meeting.** Every interim committee meeting is open to the public and webcast live — agendas and links at nmlegis.gov (click “Committees,” then “Interim”).
- **Pick your committee by your issue.** Medicaid denials, disconnected youth, and housing tied to treatment go to LHHS; school time, disaster funding, and SNAP to LFC; public defenders, jail-based treatment, and crime-reduction grants to CCJ.
- **Send a written comment.** Email the committee’s staff contact (listed at nmlegis.gov) and name three things: the agenda item, why it matters to your community, and your one ask.
- **Speak at public comment.** Most interim meetings set aside time — arrive early, check the agenda for sign-up instructions, and plan for two minutes.
- **Become a committee tracker.** Volunteer to follow one committee and give a two-minute report at our fourth-Thursday meeting — raise your hand on July 23.

Source: interim committee briefs (LHHS, LFC, CCJ); figures preliminary. Agendas at nmlegis.gov.

GENERAL ELECTION CENTER — YOUR VOTING CALENDAR

November 3 is General Election Day.

The June primary set the ballot. Now comes the election that decides who actually holds office. Here are the key dates between now and November 3 — make your plan early.

Oct 6	Voting begins. Absentee ballots start going out in the mail, and in-person early voting opens at your county clerk's office.
Oct 17	Expanded early voting begins. Additional early-voting sites open across your county.
Oct 20	Last day to request an absentee ballot.
Oct 31	Last day of early voting.
Nov 3	GENERAL ELECTION DAY. Polls open 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Same-day registration available in person.

New: NM Democratic Legislative Directory

The caucus is building a directory of New Mexico's Democratic state legislators — chamber, district, committee assignments, and leadership roles — to help members know the lawmakers who shape the issues we care about and direct their advocacy where it counts. The directory is a work in progress. *For now, copies are available only at the monthly caucus meetings — join us to pick up yours.*

Voter tools

Find your polling place — voterportal.servis.sos.state.nm.us/WhereToVoteAddress.aspx

Check your registration — voterportal.servis.sos.state.nm.us/wheretovote.aspx

Early voting by county — sos.nm.gov/voting-and-elections/voting-faqs/early-voting-in-person/

IN THE COMMUNITY

Fourth Annual Heights Night

A free, family-friendly evening hosted by Representative Pamela Herndon and the City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department.

- **When:** Saturday, July 25, 2026 · 5:00–8:00 PM
- **Where:** Lynnwood Park, 10501–10599 Lexington Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112
- **Performances:** NM State Poet Laureate Manuel Gonzalez, Public Academy for the Performing Arts, Cardboard Playhouse, and more
- **Also:** Family fun and activities, dog adoptions, and local food trucks. Bring your pups for the dog show — with prizes!

Become a Voter Registration Agent — Bernalillo County

The Bernalillo County Clerk is offering Voter Registration Agent (VRA) training — a direct way to help register voters ahead of the general election, in line with the caucus’s mission to expand participation.

- **When:** July 8 – September 3, 2026. Training pauses during the General Election period and resumes in January 2027.
- **Format:** Offered both in person and virtually, so you can choose what fits your schedule.
- **Register:** Schedule and registration — berncoclerk.gov/outreach/voter-registration-agents/

Become a Poll Worker

Help your community vote! Poll workers receive fair pay, complete thorough training, and help ensure the integrity of elections. Apply in Bernalillo County: berncoclerk.gov/poll-workers/.

Fundraising Reception with Deb Haaland, Democratic Nominee for Governor

- **When:** Saturday, August 1, 2026 · 4:30–6:00 PM
- **Where:** Rio Rancho, NM — private residence; address provided upon RSVP
- **Hosts:** Antoinette Rubolino-Garcia & Bryan Romkey and host committee (in formation), including Diale & Ndingsa Fomukong and Clovice Yinkfu
- **Suggested contributions:** Host \$500 · \$250 · \$100 · \$50
- **RSVP:** [Checks to Deb for New Mexico, PO Box 25024, Albuquerque, NM 87125.

SHARE YOUR NEWS & EVENTS

Have a community event, issue, or update you’d like the caucus to cover? Members can submit events and political information for a future newsletter. Email NewMexicoBlackCaucus@gmail.com with “Newsletter” in the subject line, and include:

- A short write-up in your own words, plus a source or link we can verify
- Date, time, and location for any event, and your name and contact for questions

Submit at least one week before the monthly meeting. Submissions should connect to the caucus’s mission and are reviewed for relevance, accuracy, and space; final decisions rest with the editor.

New Mexico Democratic Black Caucus

P.O. Box 50971, Albuquerque, NM 87181 | NewMexicoBlackCaucus@gmail.com |
newmexicoblackcaucus.com

\$30 annual dues are due each January 1. Haven’t renewed for 2026? Email us today — your dues power everything in this newsletter.