

The Voter – Observer Report
August 2026
Bernalillo County Commission – Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission to Consider Public Financing for County Candidates

Barbara Baca, District 1; Frank Baca, District 2; Adriann Barboa, District 3; Walt Benson, District 4; Eric Olivas, District 5

Walt Benson, absent from June 23 meeting

It looks like Bernalillo County voters may have an opportunity to make a decision about whether county officials should have the option of public financing of campaign expenses. Commissioner Eric Olivas introduced a bill that would amend the county charter to allow candidates for county commission, county clerk, treasurer and tax assessor to opt in to public financing for their campaigns.

The commission plans to vote on whether to put the proposed charter amendment on the ballot at its August 11 meeting. The commission also plans to appoint the Bernalillo County Manager and her designee, the county attorney and the county clerk, along with a member of the county commission to form an ad hoc group to determine the actual cost of the amendment to the county budget for the next six years.

There is a problem here. The ad hoc group would not be asked to submit their financial assessment of the cost of the amendment until August, 2027, long after the issue is put to a public vote. So, voters may be asked to approve an open-ended cost to the county budget without any real information as to the size of that cost. Commissioners say the public will have an opportunity to discuss the cost of public financing in two public hearings before the proposal is implemented, but those public hearings will come months after the proposed charter amendment vote in November.

LWVNM Position: LWVNM believes that methods of financing political campaigns and public offices should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, maximize fiscal accountability and transparency, and allow maximum citizen participation in the process.