For Immediate Release: October 1, 2020

Contact: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, [**Lilly@nmfirst.org**](mailto:Lilly@nmfirst.org) or 505-234-0694

**New Mexico First is Proud to Convene Redistricting Taskforce**

New Mexico First announces a statewide taskforce to develop recommendations about political redistricting. Retired New Mexico Supreme Court Justice Edward Chavez and retired New Mexico Court of Appeals Judge Roderick Kennedy were selected as the taskforce's co-chairs, which will begin convening virtually on October 5, 2020.

Chief Justice Chavez notes, "This bipartisan Task Force, with the high-level expertise of its members, is uniquely positioned to offer the Executive and Legislative branches an efficient, effective and economical approach to preserving the one-person-one-vote doctrine."  Judge Kennedy further explained, "In these loud and chaotic times, we hope to produce a strong roadmap to help the legislature and executive produce a calm and fair process of redistricting New Mexico next year."

Interest in redistricting, understanding about how political boundaries impacts elections and a desire for greater fairness and transparency is high. Over 140 people were nominated or self-nominated to the taskforce. Twenty-five people were selected from diverse cultural groups, a range of geographic locations, and diverse political perspectives, including Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and those who decline to state a political affiliation.

Members of the Redistricting Taskforce include 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, Democracy Rising (Santa Fe); Katon Luaces (Albuquerque); 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, Geospatial and Population Studies University of New Mexico (Albuquerque); Sandra Taylor-Sawyer, Dream Givers LLC (Clovis); N.M. State Representative Jim Townsend (Artesia).

Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director of New Mexico First, explained the potential of the taskforce. "An inclusive redistricting taskforce can strengthen guidance around fairness and openness. The public needs and deserves confidence that democracy works and that voters are choosing their elected officials rather than the perception that elected officials are choosing their voters." People who are interested in these issues may observe taskforce meetings and participate in public comment. Staff at New Mexico First drafted a background report about redistricting and the value of civic engagement. This report provides nonpartisan information about the importance of redistricting to free and fair elections. <http://nmfirst.org/redistricting-report>

A grant from the Thornburg Foundation funds this project.

*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.*