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State Auditor Wayne Johnson and Representatives Zach Cook and Cathrynn Brown Push for Audits of Publicly Funded Campaigns

SANTA FE – Working with State Auditor Wayne Johnson, State Representatives Zach Cook and Cathrynn Brown have introduced House Bill 269, Auditor Review of Publicly Financed Campaigns. The bi-partisan bill received a message from Governor Susana Martinez and has been assigned to the House Local Government, Elections, Land Grants and Cultural Affairs Committee. The bill would require the State Auditor’s office to conduct a financial review of all campaign reports filed by candidates who receive public funding for their campaigns, at both the state and local levels.

“Currently only 10% of all candidates are reviewed; meaning that few if any candidates utilizing public dollars are reviewed at all.” said State Auditor Wayne Johnson. “I believe that when candidates are using public funds to finance their campaign they should be reviewed just like any entity receiving tax dollars.”

The State Audit Act requires public entities that spend more than \$50,000 in tax-payer dollars to be subject to annual audits. Publically financed candidates often receive several times that amount.

“This bill is about transparency and accountability,” said Representative Cook. “We must ensure that the funds given to public candidates are used for legitimate campaign purposes, and not misused. This bill will provide both the Secretary of State and the State Auditor with the tools necessary to accomplish that goal.”

“This bill has bipartisan support, and provides the kind of accountability in public spending that taxpayers should be able to expect,” said Representative Cathrynn Brown.

If the bill becomes law, the Secretary of State, or a local election clerk, would forward an electronic list of campaign reports filed by publicly financed candidates after the election has been certified. Once the State Auditor has completed the review, the office would forward the report to the Secretary of State, the Attorney General and the Legislative Finance Committee.

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