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SOS Toulouse Oliver Leads Bipartisan Push to Keep Armed Secret Service Agents out of Polling Places

SANTA FE – New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver is leading a bipartisan group of Secretaries of State to prevent armed agents of the United States Secret Service being given unlimited access to polling places during elections.

“The presence of armed Secret Service agents in polling places would be intimidating to voters and likely discourage them from participating in the electoral process,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “I will continue working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to prevent it from becoming a reality.”

Earlier this month, Secretary Toulouse Oliver and 18 of her colleagues—both Democratic and Republican—sent a letter to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer urging them to remove language in the Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act that would give the President of the United States discretion to send Secret Service agents into any polling location. In the letter to Senate Leadership, Secretary Toulouse Oliver points out that the current law, which makes it a crime for a federal military or civil officer to bring or keep their troops at a polling location, was crafted intentionally so that American voters may cast a ballot free from the oversight of military officers and law enforcement. The letter also highlights the concern that the Trump administration proposal “raises the possibility that armed federal agents will be patrolling neighborhood precincts and vote centers.”

Last week, U.S. Secret Service Director Randolph Alles responded to Secretary Toulouse Oliver’s letter claiming that the intention of the proposal was to ensure Secret Service supervisors aren’t subject to criminal prosecution when sending agents with their assigned protectees on Election Day.

“This proposal by the Trump administration is a solution in search of a problem that doesn’t exist,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “The response from Director Alles does nothing to convince me that the President should have unlimited authority to send armed Secret Service agents into buildings where American citizens are exercising their right to vote, especially when the President is on the ballot and could stand to benefit politically from their presence.”

Secretary Toulouse Oliver currently serves as co-chair of the National Association of Secretaries of State Elections Committee. Secretary Toulouse Oliver was also one of eight

Secretaries of State named to the Elections Government Sector Coordinating Council (GCC) last fall. In this role, Secretary Toulouse Oliver and her fellow GCC members are working to improve communication between states and the federal government on issues like cyber threats and improving the overall security of local voting systems.

A copy of the letter Secretary Toulouse Oliver and her colleagues sent to Senate Leadership is attached. A copy of the Secret Service's response to that letter is also attached.

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