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Tobiassen & Armstrong Plan to Introduce the “Ducking Debate Rule” to Ensure NM Voters are Provided Public Debates Moving Forward, Cite Haaland’s Refusal as Inspiration

Santa Fe, NM — State Senator Nicole Tobiassen (R-Albuquerque) and House Republican Leader Gail Armstrong (R-Magdalena) announced today they are drafting legislation to require, by law, at least one televised in-person debate between the major party candidates for governor for every future general election before early voting begins. Failure to adhere to this rule would result in financial penalties to the future campaigns.

The announcement comes after Democratic gubernatorial candidate **Deb Haaland** ended negotiations last week for a debate with Republican nominee **Gregg Hull**, meaning New Mexicans are on track to head into the November 3rd election, and into early voting starting October 6th, without ever seeing the two candidates for governor debate each other on the topics most important to our state.

Coined the **“Ducking Debate Rule,”** this bill, if enacted, would prevent the unfortunate reality of this current election cycle for future general elections in New Mexico and allow eligible voters to make truly informed decisions.

"New Mexicans deserve to see both candidates for governor on the same stage, answering the same questions, before they vote," said **Senator Tobiassen**. "That's not a partisan idea. In fact, it's the bare minimum voters should be able to expect in our democratic process. When one candidate simply refuses to show up and actively ducks debates, voters are the ones who ultimately lose."

House GOP Leader Armstrong said debates are a critical test for anyone seeking to lead the state.

"Debates are more than two candidates trying to score points. They are an opportunity for the public to see how our future governor responds under pressure to the critical issues facing our state. A major party candidate for governor heading into Election Day while refusing to debate is unprecedented in modern New Mexico politics, and right now there are no consequences for it whatsoever. That needs to end. The bill Senator Tobiassen and I plan to introduce makes sure no future candidate gets to hide from the people they want to govern."

"This isn't about this election or any single candidate," Senator Tobiassen said. "It's about making sure no future candidate for governor, in either party, can simply deny critical information to eligible voters. New Mexicans deserve better than a governor's race decided without one single debate."

Tobiassen and Armstrong said they intend to introduce the bill when the Legislature next convenes in January of 2027.

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