



Criteria for State Legislative Endorsements

The goal of CVNM Action Fund's endorsement process is to use the power of endorsements and political action to implement and **reinforce our cycle of accountability to build the strongest possible climate, conservation, and democracy policy outcomes in the state legislature**. To achieve this goal, we strive to ensure that our endorsement process is methodical, predictable, and based on consistent data and objective criteria.

For legislative races, CVNM Action Fund will typically issue endorsements for eligible races ahead of primary and general elections. Our endorsement decisions always start with evaluating the performance of incumbents; if incumbents are representing the environmental and equity values of their constituents appropriately, then challengers are typically not considered. Incumbent voting records, sponsorship of legislation, environmental leadership, public statements, and ethics and conduct while in office will be considered as part of this process.

Challengers are evaluated based on the viability of their campaign and climate and conservation values, which CVNM Action Fund determines via questionnaire, interview, past record and any other available information. Open seats are a high priority for a rigorous endorsement process. They often represent the best opportunity for converting or upgrading anti-climate and anti-conservation seats, and they are vital for protecting our pro-environmental representation where the departing incumbent was a champion or ally.

Our endorsement process is conducted separately for the primary and general elections; where there is not a contested primary, general election candidate questionnaires are distributed after the primary elections have concluded. However, CVNM Action Fund may choose to issue endorsements for champion incumbents with uncontested primaries early (further described below in Endorsement Designations).

While we will endorse in primaries, it is not an automatic decision. Our goal is to identify the candidate that represents the best opportunity to enact pro-climate and pro-conservation policy, if there is one. This does not mean that we'll endorse the "least bad" option in a race. We also may not endorse if there are multiple viable candidates that represent approximately equal odds of enacting pro-environmental policy.

It is CVNM's policy not to endorse in uncontested races, so candidates in uncontested races will not receive questionnaires or be eligible for endorsement.

Candidates who receive questionnaires and do not return them are not eligible for endorsement.

Endorsement Evaluation

The endorsement process begins when a candidate or candidate's campaign receives the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to elicit a candidate's commitment to and understanding of environmental issues in their district and New Mexico. **To be eligible for endorsement consideration, CVNM Action Fund must receive a completed questionnaire by the deadline.**

After your questionnaire has been returned you may be contacted for a follow up interview by CVNM staff and/or board members either in person or via phone. The votes, environmental leadership, conduct, and public statements of candidates that have previously held elected or appointed office, including incumbents, may also be reviewed and considered.

Following a review and evaluation period, staff will submit endorsement recommendations to the political committee of the CVNM Board, who will then evaluate and finalize full recommendations to the CVNM Board for discussion and approval. The CVNM Board must vote positively on recommendations for endorsements to be adopted.

This process may seem cumbersome, but it is critical to maintaining the integrity of CVNM Action Fund's endorsement. We ask all eligible candidates seeking a CVNM Action Fund endorsement to participate fully in the questionnaire and interview process.

Endorsement Designations:

In each race, CVNM has the following endorsement options:

Early Endorsement of Incumbent Champion – This option represents an exception to the “no endorsement where uncontested” rule, as our internal procedure does allow us to make pre-primary endorsements of strong incumbents who have general election challengers. No such endorsement is recommended here. For now, this option allows us to endorse pro-climate and pro-conservation incumbents who have challengers without considering questionnaires.

Endorsement – This designation is issued to candidates in competitive races that successfully complete a questionnaire and interview, and are the strongest on our issues while also in the top tier of viability. Endorsements allow CVNM staff to publicly support the candidate and for CVNM to make direct contributions to a candidate through the CVNM Action Fund.

Conservation Qualified – CVNM Action Fund may issue a Climate and Conservation Qualified designation in a race if there are two or more candidates that are strong pro-climate and pro-conservation choices, and have completed a questionnaire. Candidates receiving a Climate and Conservation Qualified designation are not officially endorsed by CVNM Action Fund, and therefore are ineligible to receive contributions from the PAC.

No Endorsement – CVNM Action Fund may decide to make no endorsement recommendations in a race. This is commonly used in instances where no pro-environmental candidate is apparent (or no questionnaires were completed), or no single candidate’s climate and conservation credentials are clear. Races in which an endorsement is not issued are ineligible to receive contributions from CVNM Action Fund.

Endorsement Decisions

Candidates are notified of endorsements following Board approval. The endorsement is officially issued by the CVNM Action Fund Political Action Committee. All endorsements include permission to use CVNM Action Fund provided logos and graphics. CVNM Action Fund also typically issues press releases, emails, social media posts, and other communication highlighting all endorsed candidates ahead of primary and general elections. Monetary and in kind campaign contributions are subject to the discretion of CVNM staff and board.

Candidates not selected for endorsement will be notified following the board’s endorsement decision. **Please note candidates that receive no endorsement in a given race are still eligible for endorsement consideration in future races.**

Conservation Voters New Mexico Action Fund (CVNM Action Fund) is a nonpartisan “coordinated” political action committee (PAC) that works to elect pro-climate, pro-conservation candidates and to defeat anti-climate, anti-conservation candidates at the state level up to the amount allowed by New Mexico campaign finance laws. Through this work, we let voters know that – for New Mexico’s air, land, water and communities – **who we elect matters.**