

THE ROBERTS SEAT

¹The Initial Term: 5 Years
Succeeding Terms: 8 Years

ELECTIONS	JUSTICES	P	DATES OF SERVICE	
1911	² ROBERTS Clarence J.	R	JAN 1912	DEC 1916
1916	³ ROBERTS Clarence J.	R	JAN 1917	OCT 1921
	^{4,5} DAVIS JR. Stephen B.	R	NOV 1921	SEP 1922
	⁶ BARNES Richmond P.	R	SEP 1922	DEC 1922
*1922	⁷ BRATTON Sam G.	D	JAN 1923	SEP 1924
	⁸ FORT Tomlinson	D	SEP 1924	DEC 1924
1924	⁹ BICKLEY Howard L	D	JAN 1925	DEC 1932
1932	BICKLEY Howard L	D	JAN 1933	DEC 1940
1940	¹⁰ BICKLEY Howard L	D	JAN 1941	MAR 1947
	¹¹ COMPTON James C	D	APR 1947	DEC 1948
1948	COMPTON James C	D	JAN 1949	DEC 1956
1956	COMPTON James C	D	JAN 1957	DEC 1964
1964	COMPTON James C	D	JAN 1965	DEC 1972
1972	¹² MARTINEZ Joe L.	D	JAN 1973	JUL 1975
	¹³ SOSA JR. Dan	D	JUL 1975	DEC 1976
*1976	PAYNE H. Vern	D	JAN 1977	DEC 1980
1980	¹⁴ PAYNE H. Ven	D	JAN 1981	1983
	¹⁵ WALTERS Mary C.	D		DEC 1984
*1984	WALTERS Mary C.	D	JAN 1985	DEC 1988
1988	¹⁶ BACA Joseph F.	D	JAN 1989	DEC 1996
1988	BACA Joseph F.	D	JAN 1997	DEC 2004

*Election to fill unexpired term

NOTES RE ROBERTS SEAT

1. Roberts, Hanna, and Parker, the first three state supreme court justices, drew by lot initial terms of 4 years, 6 years, and 8 years, respectively, but since the election was held in 1911, each of the three initial terms were a year longer than would have been the case if the election had been held in 1912.
2. The first three state supreme court justices, Roberts, Hanna, and Parker, took office on January 10, 1912 (SCR, Book R, January 10, 1912, 1,2, 3). Parker and Roberts were NM territorial supreme court justices at the time they were elected NM state supreme court justices (NMR 15: 1909-10). Both were also delegates to the NM Constitutional Convention of 1910 (*New Mexico Historical Documents*, University of New Mexico Press, 1975, 140).
3. Roberts tendered his resignation on September 12, 1912 to take effect on November 1, 1912 (SCR, Book H, 493; also see NMR 28: 1922-23, and Roberts, 134).
4. Davis was appointed to the Roberts vacancy by Governor Merritt C. Mechem on September 12, 1921, effective November 1, 1921 (SCR, Book H, 493; also see NMR 28: 1922-23, and Roberts, 134).
5. Davis resigned on September 25, 1922 (NMR 28: 1922-23) to run for the U.S. Senate (Roberts, 135), losing to the incumbent, Democrat A. A. Jones, in the November 1922 election.
6. Barnes – who had been nominated by the Republican Party to the seat vacated by Davis – was subsequently appointed to the Davis vacancy (NMR 28: 1922-23) by Governor Merritt C. Mechem on September 18, 1922 (Roberts, 138), and took office on September 25, 1922 (SCR, Book I, 81). Shortly thereafter--in November 1922--Barnes lost to the Democratic candidate for the seat, Sam G. Bratton, who became the first regular party Democrat to win election to the state supreme court (Richard H. Hanna, a Progressive Republican, successfully ran as a Democrat for a supreme court justice seat on a fusion ticket in the November 1911 election).
7. Bratton did not seek re-nomination for the supreme court seat. Instead, he successfully sought the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senator (Roberts, 187-89), after which he resigned his supreme court seat on September 15, 1924 (NMR 29: 1923-24). Bratton subsequently defeated the incumbent, Republican Holm Bursum, in the November 1924 election for U.S. Senator.
8. Fort was appointed to the Bratton vacancy by Governor James F. Hinkle, and took office on September 19, 1924 (SCR Book I, 450; also see NMR 29: 1923-24).
9. John C. Watson is incorrectly noted as succeeding Fort (in NMR 29: 1923-24); instead, Watson succeeded Botts (in the Hanna Seat).
10. Bickley died on March 5, 1947 (NMR 50: 1946-47, v).
11. Compton was appointed to the Bickley vacancy by Governor Thomas J. Mabry on April 1, 1947, and took office on the same date (SCR, Book N; also see NMR 51: 1947-48, v).
12. Martinez tendered his resignation on June 23, 1975 (New Mexico Blue Book 1975-1976, 6), to take effect on July 23, 1975 (NMR 87: 1974-75, v).
13. Sosa was appointed to the Martinez vacancy by Governor Jerry Apodaca on July 22, 1975 (NMR 87: 1974-75, v). Instead of running for the unexpired four-year term (of the Roberts Seat) in 1976, Sosa, instead, ran (successfully) for the full-term (of the Parker Seat).
14. Payne resigned on
15. Walters was appointed to the Payne vacancy by Governor Bruce King, thus making Walters the first woman to become a NM supreme court justice. Walters retired December 31, 1988. (NMR 107; 1988-1989, v).
16. Baca elected, effective January 1, 1989. (NMR 107; 1988-1989 v.). Baca won retention in November 1996 election. (SCR)

SOURCES

- SCR New Mexico Supreme Court Records
- NMR New Mexico Reports [of the Supreme Court]
- Roberts Roberts, Susan Ann. "The New Mexico Supreme Court, 1910-1970: Politics and the Legal Community." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of New Mexico, 1974.