

# New Mexico Legislature



# Welcome to the New Mexico State Capitol!



I am excited about your interest in the New Mexico Legislature and our State Capitol! Please take this opportunity to tour the buildings and grounds, and if you are here during a legislative session, I encourage you to observe floor sessions or committee meetings.

Enjoy the architecture and art of the Capitol, which reflect New Mexico's unique culture. The vast art collection is managed by the Capitol Art Foundation and includes works displayed in the Capitol, the Capitol North, the walkway that connects the two and the surrounding grounds.

The 112 members of the New Mexico Legislature occupy the building during annual legislative sessions and during the interim to attend committee meetings. The Capitol, also known as the Roundhouse, and the Capitol North are also home to the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Office of the Secretary of State, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Understanding the legislative process is important, and this booklet is an effort to make your visit more enjoyable.

Sincerely,

YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

# ∴ The Roundhouse

New Mexico has the oldest, as well as one of the newest, state capitols in the United States.



The oldest is the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, built in 1610. The newest is the current Capitol, which was dedicated in December 1966 and underwent extensive remodeling in 1991. Built in traditional Territorial Style and resembling the Zia symbol, the building consists of four levels.

The House and Senate chambers, legislative leadership offices and some staff offices are located on the first level.

The second level is the area visitors see when they enter the building. Looking up from the rotunda, the flags of New Mexico's 33 counties



are on permanent display from the fourth-floor balcony. The skylight, 60 feet from the floor, represents an Indian basket weave; the blue represents the sky and the pale pink, the Earth. The rotunda floor is inlaid with the Great Seal of the State of New Mexico. Visitors can peruse the exhibits in the Halls of History or watch the Legislature at work from the House or Senate gallery. A visitors information center is located near the east entrance to provide assistance and tours. Legislative

office space, offices for the news media and a coffee shop that is open during legislative sessions are also located on the second floor.

House and Senate committee rooms and legislative office space are located on the third level. From this level, visitors can see the rotunda floor and better see the walls of New Mexico travertine, similar to marble, quarried 20 miles west of the Rio Grande in central New Mexico.



The fourth level houses the governor's suite, including the governor's art gallery, the lieutenant governor's office, legislative office space and staff offices.

The Capitol North was completed in 2000 and is connected to the Capitol by a walkway. The Office of the Secretary of State, Administrative Office of the Courts, legislative offices and staff offices are located here.

## ⋮ New Mexico Legislature



The organization of the New Mexico Legislature is similar to those in other states. The 112 members of the Legislature are divided into two chambers — the House of Representatives, composed of 70 members who run for office every two years, and the Senate, composed of 42 members who run for office every four years. Representatives must be 21 years or older, and senators must be 25 years or older. Legislators must be citizens of the United States and live in the districts from which they are elected. Districts are of approximately equal population. A large county, such as Bernalillo County, has many districts, while several counties with smaller populations may be represented by a single district.

Each chamber has leadership positions filled by individual legislators. The most powerful leader in the House of Representatives is the speaker of the House, who is elected by the House. The speaker appoints members to the House committees, including the chairs and vice chairs. The speaker is the presiding officer of the House and controls its procedure.

In the Senate, leadership and administrative control are exercised by the Senate Committees' Committee rather than by a single officer. This committee, which is chaired by the president pro tempore of the Senate, duplicates some of the powers and functions of the speaker of



the House. The president pro tempore of the Senate is elected to that position by the Senate. The lieutenant governor is the presiding officer of the Senate and, when serving in that capacity, is called the president of the Senate. The lieutenant governor, who is a member of the executive branch of government, can vote in the Senate only in the case of a tie vote.



The other leaders of the House and Senate are party leaders selected by caucuses. Party leadership positions in both the House and Senate are the majority floor leader, the majority whip, the minority floor leader and the minority whip. The primary purpose of these positions is to see that the interests of the respective parties in the house are well-served.

New Mexico legislators do not receive a salary, but they do receive per diem and mileage reimbursement as set forth in the Constitution of New Mexico.

The New Mexico Legislature convenes in Santa Fe at 12:00 noon on the third Tuesday in January of each year. The Legislature holds 60-day sessions in odd-numbered years and 30-day sessions in even-numbered years.

Daily sessions of the House and Senate begin with a roll call of members. Floor sessions are held nearly every day and last until the immediate business to be considered is finished. Committee meetings are generally scheduled before and after the floor sessions. The floor sessions held at the beginning of a legislative session are usually short, as legislation is being drafted and considered by committees; but toward the end of a session, floor sessions usually become longer, lasting into the late afternoon and evening. Floor sessions and committee meetings are webcast from the Legislature's website.



In addition to regular legislative sessions, the governor may call the Legislature into a special session at any time. The only matters that may be considered in a special session are those contained in the governor's proclamation calling the session. Also, the Legislature may call itself into an extraordinary session, which has only happened once, in May 2002.

Some of the activity during floor sessions is routine. At these times, legislators may not be in the chamber but may be presenting and testifying on their own bills before House and Senate committees. Other legislators may be in meetings with members or with constituents who are visiting the Capitol.

The chief clerk and other staff sit at desks just below the podium where the speaker and the president sit in their respective houses. The chief clerks are elected by the members of the respective houses. They are responsible for keeping a daily record of all matters coming before the Legislature and for all legislative documents. The chief clerks are also in charge of administrative matters, hiring and supervising employees, purchasing supplies and generally taking care of the many details connected with a legislative session.



The large boards on the walls on each side of the House chamber are part of an electronic roll call system. Members of the chamber vote electronically from their desks, and the vote is displayed on the wall boards immediately.

Many people visit the Legislature. Some come merely to observe the proceedings, while others have an interest in particular legislation. Lobbyists represent organized groups and are there to look after the interests of the groups they represent. They keep track of pending legislation and attempt to



influence the attitudes and opinions of legislators. In New Mexico, lobbyists must be registered with the Office of the Secretary of State.

## ⋮ Standing Committees

Standing committees, which meet during sessions to consider legislation, play an important role in ensuring that proposed legislation is given a fair hearing.



Committee membership is largely determined by the preferences of individual legislators. Care is taken to place members on committees in which their experience and training can be used. For example, members of the judiciary committees may be lawyers, and members of the education committees may be teachers. In the House of Representatives, the speaker appoints the committee members and the committee chairs; and in the Senate, appointments are made by the Senate Committees' Committee. Senators serve on two substantive committees, except that members serving on the Senate Finance Committee do not serve on any other substantive committee. Representatives serve on no more than two substantive standing committees. For a complete list of committees and their memberships, visit the Legislature's website.

Each piece of legislation is generally referred to two or three committees. In the House of Representatives, legislation is referred to committees by the speaker; in the Senate, by the bill's sponsor, subject to the approval of the Senate. After the legislation has been referred to a committee, it is scheduled for consideration. Committee hearings are open to the public, and interested parties may testify in favor of or in opposition to a proposal. Upon completion of discussion and testimony, the committee makes its decision on the legislation and reports its recommendation to the full House or Senate. Members of the Legislature rely heavily on a committee's judgment when they consider the adoption of a committee's report.



## ∴ Interim Committees

Legislators also serve on interim committees, which meet between legislative sessions to consider and study a variety of issues. Interim committees consist of both House and Senate members and are staffed by the Legislative Council Service, except for the Legislative Education Study Committee and the Legislative Finance Committee, which have their own staffs.

Interim committees, which meet throughout New Mexico, generally meet from June through November. More information about interim committee meetings can be found on the Legislature's website.

## ∴ Types of Legislation

A **bill** is the form of legislation used to propose laws. A bill may originate in either chamber, but in order to become law, it must be passed by both houses and signed by the governor. By custom, a general appropriation act, which appropriates the money to fund state government, originates in the House, but there is no requirement that it do so.

A **resolution** is a formal declaration of the Legislature concerning some subject that it either cannot or does not wish to control by law. Resolutions are joint, concurrent or simple, and they require no action on the part of the governor. A joint resolution can propose an



amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico and, if passed, is voted on by New Mexico voters. Joint resolutions are also used to express the will of the Legislature, such as approving the sale, trade or lease of state-owned real property. Concurrent resolutions are used for the





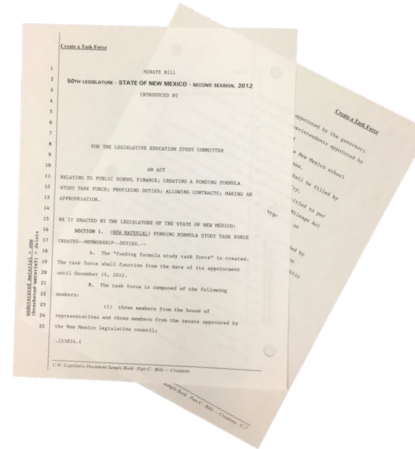
purpose of adopting or amending joint rules of the Legislature. Simple resolutions are seldom used.

A *memorial* is an expression of legislative desire that is usually addressed to another governmental body in the form of a petition or declaration of intent. For example, a memorial may ask the Department of Transportation to build a road in a certain part of the state or a legislative interim committee to study a particular issue. Joint memorials are passed by both houses; simple memorials are an expression of only one house.

## ⋮ Passage of a Bill

Remember the Schoolhouse Rock song, "I'm Just a Bill"? That's how it actually works.

- 1. Introduction and Committee Referral.** A bill may be introduced in the House of Representatives or in the Senate. It is assigned a number, read twice by title, ordered printed and referred to the proper committee.
- 2. Committee Consideration.** Committee meetings are open to the public. A bill may receive one of the following recommendations: Do Pass, Do Pass As Amended, Do Not Pass, Without Recommendation or Without Recommendation As Amended. A bill may also be tabled in committee, where it remains unless subsequent action is taken.
- 3. Adoption of Committee Report.** Reports of committees are subject to adoption by the full House and Senate. When a favorable committee report is adopted, the bill is placed on the calendar, which is the list of bills scheduled for third reading and possible final passage.



4. **Third Reading, Voting and Final Passage.** Following sometimes lengthy debate on a bill, a final and recorded vote is taken on whether to pass the bill. There must be a quorum present, and every bill requires at least a majority vote of the members present in order to pass. A quorum is a simple majority of the members.

5. **Concurrence.** The bill is sent to the other chamber and repeats the procedure outlined above. Legislation that is amended in the second house must be sent back to the first house for agreement. This is called concurrence. If either house fails to concur with an amendment, the differences must be reconciled by a conference committee representing both the House and Senate. A compromise worked out in a conference committee is subject to approval by both houses.



6. **Enrolling and Engrossing.** After passage by both houses, a bill is carefully copied by the enrolling and engrossing staff of the house in which it originated, signed by the presiding officers of each house and then sent to the governor.

7. **Governor's Action.** The governor may sign a bill, veto it or, if it carries an appropriation, partially veto it. The Legislature may override the governor's veto by a two-thirds' vote.

8. **Laws.** Not all laws go into effect at the same time. Some bills carry emergency clauses and become effective as soon as the governor signs them, some become law 90 days after the Legislature adjourns and others take effect at the start of the next fiscal year or calendar year or some other specified date.



# ⋮ Legislative Council Service

The Legislative Council Service (LCS) was established in 1951 to provide year-round staff services for legislators. Bill drafters, researchers, librarians, proofreaders, word processors, print service operators, information technology staff, financial assistants and other employees provide a multitude of services for members of the Legislature.

The LCS prepares the legislation that is introduced in the Legislature. This drafting service is provided to every legislator, to interim and standing committees and to state agencies and public institutions. In addition, at the request of a legislator, the LCS will assist in the preparation of legislation for private groups and citizens.

The LCS maintains a legislative reference library covering almost any subject on which a legislator might need information. The LCS also does general administrative tasks; that is, it maintains the legislative buildings and grounds through the Legislative Building Services staff, maintains the equipment belonging to the Legislature, forwards mail, answers correspondence upon requests from legislators, provides staff and accounting services for interim committees, schedules meetings, provides information technology services and provides printing services. The LCS also runs the joint billroom/mailroom services provided during the legislative session.



A 16-member permanent legislative interim committee, the New Mexico Legislative Council, serves as a board of directors for the LCS. Its statutory members are the speaker of the House, the minority floor leader of the House, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the minority floor leader of the Senate and six representatives and six senators chosen proportionally from the majority and minority. The New Mexico Legislative Council appoints members to most interim committees.



# Legislative Education Study Committee

The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), which was created in 1971 as a permanent committee of the New Mexico Legislature, and LESC staff study public education and laws governing education in New Mexico as well as the policies and costs of the New Mexico educational system. The committee is also responsible for recommending changes in laws relating to education.

The LESC is composed of legislators appointed proportionally from both houses and political parties. The committee meets regularly during the interim to study kindergarten through twelfth grade education issues. The LESC provides legislators with objective information pertaining to New Mexico public schools as well as state and national education trends.



LESC staff members provide support for all of the committee's functions, conduct research, prepare reports and present findings and recommendations to the committee. Staff members also assist individual legislators in assembling and presenting information about education and analyzing potential education legislation.

The LESC also serves as a resource to New Mexico residents, state and national organizations, education policymakers, local school districts and education agencies.

The major responsibilities of the LESC staff during legislative sessions are to assist the education committees of the House and Senate as well as other committees by providing analyses of public



school-related legislation and by supplying technical support in the development of public school support appropriations.

## Legislative Finance Committee

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) was established in 1957 as a fiscal and management oversight arm of the New Mexico Legislature. The role of the committee and its staff in the state budget process has grown as the complexity and size of the budget has increased. The committee makes budgetary recommendations to the Legislature for the funding of state government, higher education and public schools. The committee also prepares legislation addressing financial and management issues of state government.



In 1991, the LFC assumed responsibility for the performance audit program, previously a part of the Office of the State Auditor. The Program Evaluation Unit, as it is known, reviews the costs, efficiency and effectiveness of activities of state agencies and political subdivisions and recommends changes to the Legislature.

New Mexico is unusual in that both the governor and an agency of the Legislature (the LFC) propose comprehensive state budgets to the full Legislature.

The economists from the LFC and executive agencies also collaborate on the consensus revenue estimates presented to the Legislature and the governor.



# Communicating with Your Legislator



Writing letters or emailing can be very effective means of making legislators aware of your opinions on legislation. Write to legislators prior to or during the time the matter in which you are interested is being considered, and do not hesitate to write to the chair of a committee that is considering legislation.

During sessions, your legislators will be extremely busy. Consider making an appointment in order to make your visit more successful. State your points as clearly and as briefly as possible and give specific examples to support your opinion. Be willing to listen to the views of others who may disagree with you.

For any additional information, please visit the New Mexico Legislature's website. You may view a legislator's contact information and find legislation, calendars, agendas, links to webcasts of floor sessions and committee meetings and other information about important issues facing the state.



# Can You Answer These Questions?

1. When was New Mexico's State Capitol built?
2. What are the two houses of the Legislature called?
3. How many legislators serve in the Senate? In the House?
4. How often does the Legislature meet, and for how long?
5. Who are the leaders of the House and Senate?
6. What are the functions of committees?
7. What are lobbyists?
8. What are the various types of legislation?
9. What is it called when the governor disapproves of a bill?
10. When do new laws go into effect?



# History of the New Mexico State Flag



New Mexico's flag is one of many to have flown over the state. It was preceded by the flags of Spain, Mexico, the Confederate States of America, the United States and an earlier state flag. The first flag featured a small American flag in the upper left quadrant, a state seal in the lower right and the words "New Mexico" stitched in red diagonally across a dark blue background. This flag flew from 1912 to 1925, when it was replaced by the Zia flag. The Zia flag is a modern interpretation of an ancient sun design on a late nineteenth century water jar from the Pueblo of Zia. The red sun symbol is called a "Zia symbol" and is shown on a field of gold. Red and gold are the colors of Queen Isabella de Castile and represent the colors of old Spain.

## Zia Symbol



The Zia symbol is closely associated with the Land of Enchantment. Inspired by a design found on a nineteenth century water jar from the Pueblo of Zia, it represents a circular sun with linear rays extending in four directions. To the Zia people, four is a significant number. It is embodied in the four directions of the earth, four seasons of the year, four times of the day (sunrise, noon, evening and night) and life's four divisions of childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. Everything is bound together in a circle of life, without beginning, without end. The Zia believe, too, that in this great brotherhood of all things, humans have four sacred obligations: develop a strong body, a clear mind, a pure spirit and a devotion to the welfare of their people.





# Great Seal of the State of New Mexico

The Great Seal of the State of New Mexico has changed little since the Territorial seal of 1851. The American bald eagle shielding the smaller Mexican eagle within its wings symbolizes New Mexico's change of sovereignty in 1846. The bald eagle, which represents bravery, skill and strength, clasps three arrows in its talons. The smaller Mexican brown (or harpy) eagle grasps a snake in its beak and cactus in its talons. This portion of the seal is still the official symbol of Mexico; it illustrates the ancient myth in which the gods ordered the Aztecs to settle where they saw an eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent. The scroll below the American and Mexican eagles contains the motto *Crescit Eundo* or, translated from Latin, "It Grows As It Goes". The date 1912 was added to the seal when New Mexico was admitted as the forty-seventh state.



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**State Slogan** - *"Everybody is somebody in New Mexico."*

**State Nickname** - *"The Land of Enchantment."*

**State Question** - *"Red or green?"*

**State Answer** - *"Red and green or Christmas."*



# Official State Symbols



*State Aircraft -  
Hot Air Balloon*



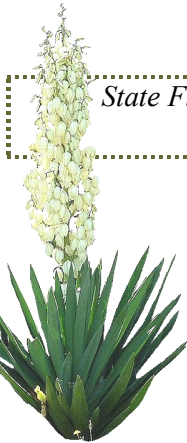
*State Fossil -  
Coelophysis*



*State Reptile - New  
Mexico Whiptail  
Lizard*



*State Cookie -  
Bizcochito*



*State Flower -  
Yucca*

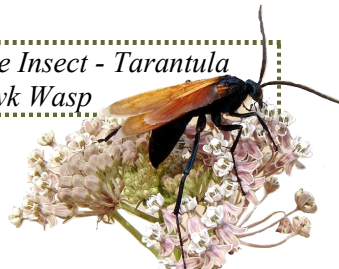
*State Fish -  
Cutthroat Trout*



*State Bird -  
Roadrunner*



*State Insect - Tarantula  
Hawk Wasp*



*State Tree -  
Piñon Tree*



Pinecone photo credit: snowpeak  
Piñon photo credit: jotor at Flickr



# Official State Symbols



*State Grass -  
Blue Grama  
Grass*



*State Butterfly -  
Sandia Hairstreak*

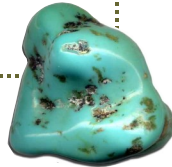


*State Amphibian -  
Spadefoot Toad*



*State Necklace -  
Native American  
Squash Blossom Necklace*

*State Gem -  
Turquoise*

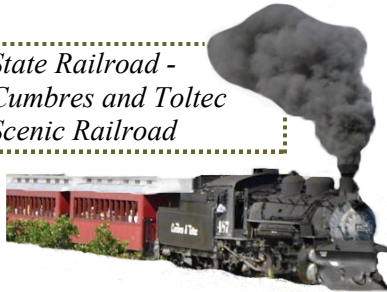


*State Vegetables -  
Chile and Pinto Bean*



*State Tie -  
Bolo Tie*

*State Railroad -  
Cumbres and Toltec  
Scenic Railroad*



*State Animal -  
New Mexico  
Black Bear*



New Mexico Legislative Council Service  
411 State Capitol  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501  
(505) 986-4600  
[www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov)  
202.204646

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Thank you for visiting the New Mexico  
Legislature and State Capitol!

