NEW MEXICO COMMISSION ON THE STATUS *of Women*

WOMEN'S DAY OF ACTION

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY 101

Getting Involved at The New Mexico Legislature

What is Legislative Advocacy?

Advocating at the legislature is a great way to participate in making our community a better place. Much like voting, advocacy sends a message about what issues you care about. It involves telling elected officials what bills or issues you want them to act on and how. As an organization, the Commission on the Status of Women is dedicated to advocating at the New Mexico Legislature as we work tirelessly to support all women in our state. In fact, every woman in the state can make an impact by getting involved in legislative advocacy.

These are some **advocacy tips** that will help you be successful in making your case with the local legislature.

Year-Round Advocacy: Engage with Legislators

Do you have an issue or a bill that you care about? Find out the legislators who will be weighing in on those bills and reach out to them.

1. Find Your Representative & Senator

The New Mexico Legislature website has a Find My Legislator tool that allows you to search by your address. NM Legislature's website is **www.nmlegis.gov.** There is also a directory of leaders with office numbers, email addresses, and phone numbers. Keep in mind that the lists will be updated on January 21, 2025 for this year's legislators, as there are newly elected officials taking office. Scan the QR code to find your legislators.

2. How to Engage With Your Legislator

Regardless of how you reach out, remember that votes are more likely to fall in your favor if you are **concise, factual, and polite.** It's also important to have a compelling reason for a vote for or against any topic. Take time to craft a message that has some data to back up your point of view. More importantly, practice telling or writing your specific story about why it matters to you. People like to know things are true and facts build your case. However, personal stories are thought provoking and far more memorable.

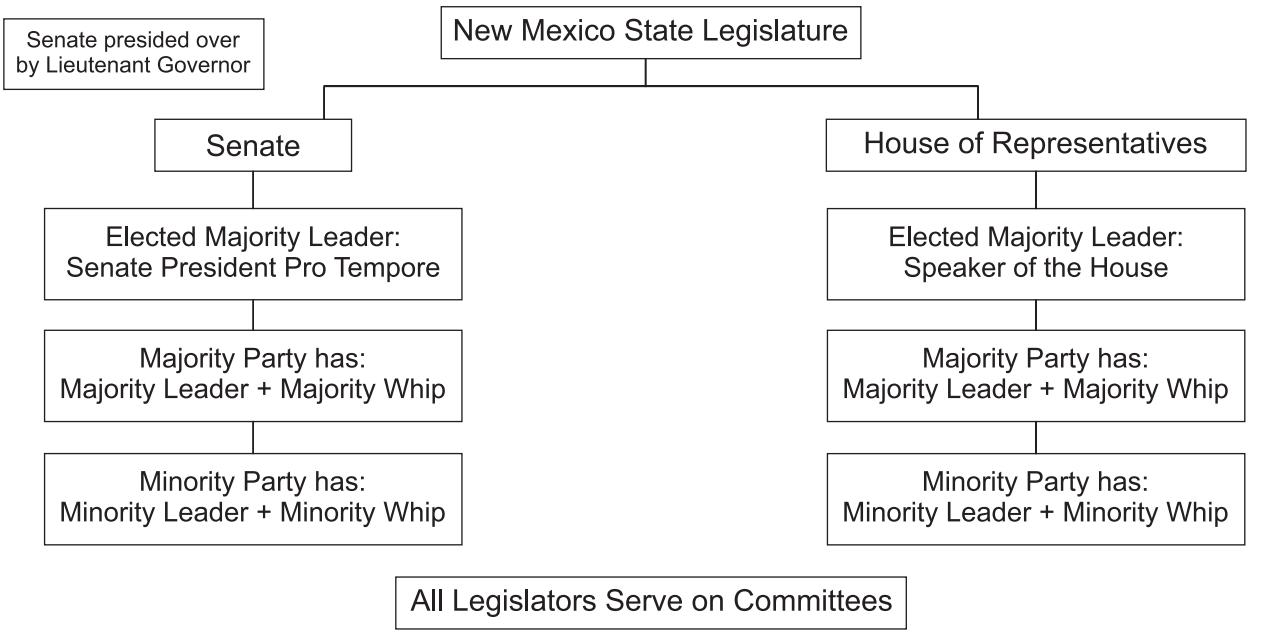
3. Don't Be Afraid to Meet With Legislators Who May Not Agree With You

Part of advocacy is educating people who don't share your opinion in order to potentially sway their actions and votes on it. Even if you don't win a vote, you will likely find some common ground. Being polite and listening helps you understand their concerns, and helps keep the door open for further discussions. Being rude, overly argumentative, arrogant, or condescending will end a discussion and could lose you a supporter even for other issues down the road.

The New Mexico Legislative Structure

There are two chambers in the New Mexico legislature: the House and the Senate. Each chamber of the state legislature has a leader who is elected from the majority party (the political party that holds the most seats) by the members of that chamber. The leader of the Senate is called the Senate President Pro Tempore. In the House the leader is the Speaker of the House.

Under the Speaker and the President Pro Tem are the Majority Leader and the Majority Whip in each chamber. The minority party is represented by the Minority Leader and the Minority Whip. The job of the Whip is to round up members for important votes. Just as the U.S. Vice President presides over the U.S. Senate, the Lieutenant Governor presides over the state Senate, casting tie-breaking votes when necessary. When bills are passed they go to the Governor for a signature to become law.



Committees

All legislators serve on committees. Committees are powerful because they hear legislation before it is considered by the full House or Senate. Those committees that meet during the legislative session are called standing committees. Work also happens year-round on interim committees. Each committee is run by its chair or co-chairs and has a vice chair. For each committee there are leaders and potentially ranking members who lead those committees. You can find a full list of committees on the Committees page of nmlegis.gov.

Monitor Legislation & Attend Hearings

The annual legislative session in New Mexico is busy and often action-packed.The New Mexico state Legislature meets for a 60-day regular session in odd-numbered years such as this year, 2025. Sixty-day sessions consider any and all legislative matters, while 30-day sessions (held in even numbered years) are limited to budgetary matters and those items placed on the governor's agenda. If you want to be effective in your legislative advocacy it is a good idea to keep track of the bills you care about and the committee hearings where the bills are discussed. The New Mexico Legislature website provides an easy way to search for and track bills. Scan the QR code for a video tutorial.

As you track bills, plan to attend or watch hearings. The public is invited to participate in the legislative process including committee meetings where bills are discussed. You can even provide public comment at a hearing if you like. This can be done in person or virtually using a Zoom link available for every committee hearing. (Some committees require that you request a link in advance.)