

**LWSNM Legislative Priorities for 2025 Legislative Session**

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6. **Affordable Housing:**

LWVNM Position Summary: [Affordable Housing](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html#housing) supports increasing housing options, promotes a variety of housing styles and types for rent or purchase integrated within communities, support strategies including public and private partnerships and grants, and affordable housing trust for moderate to low income households.

* Legislation:
	+ Bill to create Office of Housing, Likely sponsor: Governor’s bill, possibly Senator Michael Padilla. [See SB71 2024 Regular Session creates an Office of Housing, administratively attached to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) with a director appointed by the governor, that would study housing issues and work with governments and private developers to plan projects and acquire funding to address housing needs. It would work with the Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) and across state and local agencies to coordinate projects. Its analysis of housing data would include an evaluation of geographic gaps, progress toward adequate housing supplies, and housing initiatives and investment.]
	+ Bill to appropriate one-time investment (non-recurring expense) of $500M from the General Fund to the Housing Trust Fund, Likely sponsor: Senator Nancy Rodriguez. [see SB7, 2024 Regular Session] MFA (now known as Housing NM) is the trustee of the New Mexico housing trust fund. With a staff of 120 it administers more than 40 programs delivered at the local level through a network of hundreds of private/public partnerships. Although it was created as a quasi-governmental agency, its board of directors is made up of government officials and governor appointees and it answers to a legislative oversight committee. Funding for housing has become more stable recently through the Legislature’s authorization of recurring funding the housing trust fund from severance tax capacity starting in 2024. Laws 2022, Chapter 38, amended the Severance Tax Bonding Act, earmarking 2.5 percent of annual senior severance tax bond for the HTF. The first deposit in FY24 to the HTF fund was $37.5 million. Funding is allocated for production (52 percent), homeownership (32 percent), and preservation & development (16 percent). Nearly $19 million of $37.5 million has been awarded by the MFA Board. The authority issued the New Mexico House Strategy in 2022 that provides broad policy recommendations for improving housing opportunities in New Mexico.
* Appropriations:
	+ General Fund: HB2. TBD.
	+ [Governor’s Proposed Budget](https://www.nmdfa.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Executive-Budget-FY26-4.pdf): p.24
		- $50 million for Dept. of Finance and Administration for a housing downpayment assistance program to build 1,000 new affordable homes for first-time buyers currently priced out of homeownership
		- $50 million for Dept. of Finance and Administration for innovative approaches to address homelessness and housing insecurity. This funding will support new evidence-based programs that include prevention, shelter, case management, and long-term housing assistance all delivered within a framework focused on outcomes.
		- $2 million to for statewide housing (strategic) initiatives for NM Office of Housing
		- $200 million for the Veterans Service Department for veteran transitional housing services, life skills training, and case management
	+ Junior money bill for specific affordable housing development projects statewide: Likely sponsor: House Speaker Javier Martinez
1. **Healthcare**

LWVNM Position Summary: [Health Care](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html#healthcare) supports a health care system that provides a comprehensive level of health care for New Mexico residents and recognizes the need for efficient management of health care costs. . . .The League favors a national health insurance plan, but until one is in place, the League supports expansion of state and federal plans. . . . A comprehensive effort to improve the quality and safety of health care in New Mexico should be launched and sustained, with dramatically increased public funding.

* Legislation:
	+ Bill to establish oversight of hospital mergers and acquisitions, aka Health Care Consolidation Oversight Act. Likely sponsor Rep. Reene Sczcepanski and Sen. Katy Duhigg [SB15, 2024 Regular Session, passed, signed by Governor and chaptered provided temporary (1 year, terminates July 1, 2025) oversight of hospital mergers and acquisitions, but limited in its scope, covers only hospitals, no role for AG, no specified enforcement or right of appeal and provides complete confidentiality with no public input] See presentation on SB15, public meetings, and proposed legislation in 2025 to [Interim Comm. of Courts, Corrections & Justice, October 10, 2024](https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/CCJ%20100924%20Item%208%20Health%20Care%20Consolodation%20Oversight%20Act.pdf).
	+ Bill to increase eligibility for Medicaid aka Medicaid Forward. Likely sponsor Rep. Reena Sczcepanski [HB400, 2023 Regular Session, directed Health Care Authority to contract with Mercer to prepare a [study](https://www.hca.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/Medicaid-Forward-Report_November-Revisions_11202024.pdf) to estimate the impact of expanding Medicaid eligibility so that health care coverage would be available for most New Mexicans under age 65 who are not otherwise eligible for the existing Medicaid program.] Officials estimate Medicaid Forward could cost up to $88 million in recurring administrative costs. The state share would account for about $44 million of those costs, according to the recent HCA report, which includes staffing, contracting and IT system changes. If passed next year, the program would start to phase in coverage by 2028. The reimbursement rate for Medicaid right now is 120% of Medicare and in January will increase to 150%, which helps cover costs for clinicians.
	+ Bills to increase health care provider recruitment and retention. [Advocacy by Think NM](https://www.thinknewmexico.org/health-care-worker-shortage/). Bills that fall within the purview of LSVNM Health Care Position highlighted in green.
		- Reform the state’s medical malpractice act
		- Join all ten interstate healthcare worker compacts
		- Create a centralized credentialing system
		- Make NM student loan repayment program for health care professionals more competitive
		- Repeal GRT on medical services
		- Increase and expand the Rural Healthcare Practitioner Tax Credit
		- Enhance Medicaid reimbursement rates to health care providers
		- Expand health-care-related career and technical education in high school to grow our own health care workforce
		- Importing more international medical graduates into New Mexico
		- Increase salaries for faculty training future health care professionals and provide tax credit for preceptors who provide community-based education for doctors, nurses and others
		- Using some of the state’s one-time surplus from oil and gas taxes to create a $2 billion permanent fund for health care to generate income to pay for these and other reforms in perpetuity.
	+ Health Security for New Mexicans is advocating for additional funding ($1M for consultants/experts and 0.25M to create NM Health Expenditure database) to assist the legislature and Interim Committee Legislative Health & Human Services Committee study and identify appropriate NM solutions to rising costs of healthcare including global budgets for hospitals, reducing administrative burdens associated with payment and accountability, bill, participation in a drug purchasing consortium, and collection of NM health expenditure data.
* Appropriations:
	+ Feed bill: TBD.
	+ HB2: TBD

* + [Governor’s Proposed Budget](https://www.nmdfa.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Executive-Budget-FY26-4.pdf): continued funding for needed programs
		- P. xix To support medical education
			* A $25 million to boost the UNM School of Medicine faculty endowment
			* $25 million for the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program
		- P. xxi
			* recommends $13 million in recurring funds to provide rate increases up to 150 percent of Medicare rates
		- p. 63 Office of Superintendent of Insurance $1.5M For implementation of the Health Care Consolidation Oversight Act, contingent upon passage of legislation.
1. **Immigration**

LWVNM Position Summary: [LWVNM supports immigration policies](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html#immigration) that: promote reunification of families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; provide due process for those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; provide for student visas; ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons; incorporate immigrants into our communities by providing access to education; endorse the development of secure identification documents; respect the right of state and local law enforcement personnel to perform their duties without the burden of enforcing federal immigration policies. In transition to a reformed system, LWVNM supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

LWVUS Position Summary: [Immigration policies](https://www.lwv.org/other-issues/immigration) should promote the reunification of immediate families, meet economic, business, and employment needs, and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises.

* Legislation:
	+ Bills to defend and protect immigrant families and workers in NM. Advocacy by Somos Un Pueblo Unido, El Centro de Igualidad y Derechos, The Santa Fe Dreamers Project, The Semilla Project and the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. Bills that fall within the purview of LWVNM Immigration Position highlighted in green.
		- No state resources for enforcing civil and federal immigration laws,
		- Limit the sharing of personal and sensitive information of New Mexico residents by state employees with outside individuals and organizations and ensure driver’s license data isn’t shared with ICE through data brokers.
		- Additional funding to support nonprofit organizations that provide legal representation in deportation, adjustment of status, and citizenship cases, especially in rural communities,
		- Economic relief for immigrant families with children who lose their work income due to I-9 audits, workplace raids, or other immigration enforcement.
		- Restrict state and local governments from contracting with ICE for the purposes of civil immigration detention,
		- Promote U-visa certification by local and state law enforcement officials to support undocumented victims of crime in accessing crucial public safety resources.
		- Access to in-state tuition and financial aid for adult immigrant workers and Special Juvenile Immigrant Juvenile Status (SJIS) applicants enrolled in credit and noncredit workforce development programs,
		- Funds for the Adult Education Department to provide more English language courses, GED, citizenship preparation tutoring, and other adult training programs,
		- Flexible funds for regional workforce boards to expand their support services, such as providing computers, internet payments, travel stipends, etc.
1. **Water**

LWVNM position summary on water:

Environmental Justice: The League believes that government must conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that promotes equity and affords fair treatment, accessibility, and protection for all residents, regardless of race, age, culture, income, or geographic location.

Water Quality: The League supports stringent regulations to protect ground and surface water quality from pollution that can impact human health as well as the natural flora and fauna. Such regulations must be strictly enforced.

Water Resources/Supply: The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that consumptive use of water in New Mexico must be in balance with renewable supply. Healthy ecosystems naturally perform services that benefit both people and nature, such as cleaning water, reducing floods, and creating fish and wildlife habitat. To secure the benefits of functioning ecosystems and to conserve New Mexico's biodiversity, sufficient water must be budgeted for environmental flows. The creation and adherence to comprehensive water budgets is essential to preserve public lands, water, and open space, and to ensure that there will be enough water for future generations of New Mexicans. The state, water regions, and local governments must

1. monitor and measure all water resources and uses, and publish this information;
2. use a public process to create and follow water budgets;
3. educate citizens on their responsibilities as well as their rights;
4. promote strategies to reduce demand;
5. minimize water contamination in order to promote the health and safety of all life;
6. preserve and restore rivers and watersheds.

Conservation of water and efficiency of use must be encouraged to enable New Mexico to meet its interstate compact obligations, to help balance use with supply, to relieve stress on the physical system, and to reduce net depletion.

Regional Water Planning: The League supports continued funding for regional planning. Using a public process, regional planning should (1) gather and publish data on supply and demand, and provide regular updates; (2) create a balanced water budget; and (3) identify critical and emerging issues.

* Legislation:
	+ Amend the New Mexico Water Quality Act to implement a point source discharge permitting program for state waters. The SCOTUS ruling in Sacket v. EPA rolled back protections for the “surface waters of the U.S.” such that 93% of surface waters in NM may no longer fall under the EPA’s protection like ephemeral (seasonal) streams, arroyos and wetlands. Currently, the EPA is the sole permitting authority in NM. The purpose of the proposed NMED permitting program is to protect surface waters of the state from pollution and degradation from a single point source. The program will require industrial, municipal, and other facilities to obtain permits from NMED to control the discharge of pollutants if they discharge contaminants from point sources into surface waters, including wetlands. The program will not apply to nonpoint source pollution, and the program will not require permits for the use of water in irrigated agriculture, consistent with the Water Quality Act (NMSA 1978 Section 74-6-4, Paragraph M). The 2024 state legislature appropriated $7.6 million to the New Mexico Environment Department’s water quality management fund to develop the permitting program. The executive isn’t asking for additional money this year for developing a surface water regulatory program, saying that the $7.6 million added to the New Mexico Environment Department budget last year suffices. The NMED and numerous nonprofit organizations are advocating for the amendments.
	+ Funding for water aquifer mapping and basic water data collection of the state, water education for elected officials and regional water planning.
* Appropriations:
	+ HB2: TBD
	+ [Governor’s Proposed Budget](https://www.nmdfa.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Executive-Budget-FY26-4.pdf):
		- p. XII, $5 million for water planning and water data
		- p. XII $28.7 million for aquifer monitoring and groundwater research at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
		- p. XIII $10 million to support water conservation technologies and practices in agriculture for NMDA
		- p. XIII $35 million special appropriation to the Office of the State Engineer for Indian water rights settlements.

5.**Education Legislation**

* **Funding instruction of K-12 educators.** House Bill 39 Appropriations for Higher Education . . . to Comply with Court’s Rulings in . . . Martinez and Yazzie Lawsuit (Introduced by Yanira Gurrola and Patricia Roybal Caballero in 2024 Session); it died in the LFC Committee. This funding is needed to better prepare educators to provide the kinds of learning experiences and climates students need to want to be in school and to function successfully in a complex global society. This includes making sure educators provide culturally rich, multicultural/multilingual real-world projects and multiple forms of assessments. LWVNM Education Position **Promoting Continuous Improvement in Learning #3; Post-secondary Education #5**
* **Public education funding for chronic absenteeism prevention.** Absenteeism in New Mexico continues to be a leading catalyst as to why students will not reach their academic and personal potential. More severe rates of chronically absent students exist in certain subpopulations: students who are poor, Hispanic, Native American, and emergent bilinugals.More funding for community schools may also assist with supporting students and resolving complex barriers related to chronic absenteeism. Such programs should include learning experiences related to resiliency of and self-advocacy by the students. LWVNM Education Position **K-12 Education #s 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11; Post-secondary Education #s 1, 2, and 5**
* **Funding for Effective TESOL, Bilingual, and Dual Language Education** **for All Educators** to include costs of preparation, continuing professional development, and ongoing additional compensation for applying these skills with all students. Research provides evidence that dual language education approaches to learning close academic achievement gaps by creating cognitive challenges through thematic units of the core academic curriculum, focused on real world problem solving. There are not goals for students to *exit* the program, but rather to continue the program throughout K-12 grades. The programs influence positive school reform leading to participants seeing the whole school as community with friendships that cross social class and language boundaries; they lessen behavior problems. Research also suggests evidence that managing two languages expands brain networks. LWVNM Education Position **Teachers, Administrators, and Staff #s 2, 4, 5, and 6; K-12 Education #s 9, 10, 11, and 12; Promoting continuous Improvement in Learning #5; Post-secondary Education #5**

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