



2011 Policy Priorities

A Progressive Policy Agenda

To Improve the Well-Being of New Mexico's Children and Families

Updated September 2010



Introduction

New Mexico Voices for Children is a statewide progressive, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of children and families in New Mexico. Our mission is to eliminate child poverty and improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.

NM Voices advocates for economic and social justice, and healthier communities for New Mexico's children and families. Founded in 1987 by a group of pediatricians, NM Voices integrates research with policy advocacy, effective communications and coalition-building to catalyze sustainable systemic change that reduces poverty and improves the well-being of children. NM Voices is recognized and relied upon by policy-makers, the media, a broad range of organizations and the public for sound research and policy analysis.

The nonpartisan analysis and legislative expertise that NM Voices' experienced team brings to policy makers helps them meet the challenge of improving the lives of children and families throughout New Mexico. For more than 20 years, NM Voices has been a vital resource to New Mexico policy-makers, providing evidence-based policy solutions and expert testimony at public hearings and legislative committee meetings.

Having worked in the deliberative process of the legislature, we appreciate and understand the competing demands for public resources and the difficult process of prioritizing needs. NM Voices make every effort to prioritize needs and bring forward policy recommendations that are evidence-based, timely, cost-efficient and practical. NM Voices welcomes your support and your feedback.

Please address comments regarding this document to Bill Jordan, Policy Director, at bjordan@nmvoices.org.

New Mexico Voices for Children is guided by four **Core Values**:

- **Economic Justice:** Fair and responsible tax and budget policies; economic opportunity for all
- **Healthy Communities:** Affordable health care, quality education, and safe neighborhoods for all
- **Human Rights:** Equality is not limited by one's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation; human dignity for all
- **Civic Participation:** Our collective and individual voices matter

Our issue areas are organized under our four core values and each issue area corresponds to one or more of the outcomes envisioned in our **New Mexico Children's Charter**.

The Next Twenty Years: Nurturing a New Generation

The New Mexico Children's Charter

1. No child lives in poverty
2. Every child and adult has access to quality health care, including mental health care
3. Every family has access to affordable, safe and high quality early childcare and education
4. Every child has access to a public education system that is fully funded and in which resources are equitably distributed
5. Every New Mexican can afford to go to college
6. Our youth have access to positive development opportunities and alternatives to incarceration
7. Our youth have enough positive options available to them that they put off parenthood until they are older and economically independent
8. Every family has safe, affordable housing and sufficient, nutritious food
9. Our economic development strategy provides for jobs that pay living wages, guarantee family leave, protect workers' rights, and provide access to education to improve skills and success in the workplace
10. Our tax system is transparent, everyone pays their fair share, and it generates enough revenue to maintain necessary programs
11. Children and families are a high priority in federal, state and local budgets
12. Every family has access to appropriate credit, and predatory lending practices are abolished
13. Our state has and enforces strong environmental laws that protect public health and the future of the planet
14. All communities, regardless of diversity, size or place, have a voice in state government
15. Our voter rights are protected and civic participation is encouraged
16. Our elected officials are held accountable through campaign finance reform and ethics laws
17. All New Mexicans are assured protection of their human rights and civil liberties
18. No one experiences disparities in education, health, economic opportunity, housing, civil rights, self determination or personal power because of their race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation
19. All immigrants to New Mexico are protected by just and humane immigration policies
20. Every community is a safe, welcoming place for families and children

Core Value: Economic Justice

Fair and responsible tax and budget policies; economic opportunity for all

Issue Areas: Tax & Budget; Wages & Work Supports; Asset Building

Economic justice means that no one who works full time lives in poverty, that every family has the opportunity to work towards economic stability and prosperity, and that the tax system is just—meaning those who have benefited the most from this country's resources, pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes. Progressive tax policies also assure adequate state revenue to fund all-important services like health care, education and public safety. Tax and spending policies reduce poverty.

Issue Area: Progressive Tax Policy Reform, an Adequate Budget, and Family-Based Priorities

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#1**: No child lives in poverty; **#10**: Our tax system is transparent, everyone pays their fair share, and it generates enough revenue to maintain necessary programs; and **#11**: Children and families are a high priority in federal, state and local budgets)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Close the loophole that allows out-of-state corporations to avoid paying corporate income tax to New Mexico on the profits they make here. For more information, see our report *Corporate Shell Games: How Wal-Mart and Others Shield Their Profits from New Mexico Taxes* (updated Jan. 2009) and page 5 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Reinstate the estate tax on property worth more than \$2 million, exempting family farms.
- End special treatment of capital gains income. New Mexico is one of just a few states that allow such a generous tax deduction for this unearned income.
- Roll back the income tax cuts of 2003 for the wealthiest tax filers or create a surtax for them in order to raise much-needed revenue and avoid deeper cuts to education and health care. For more information, see our policy brief *Tax Fairness: Why We Need to Put Some Progressivity Back Into NM's Tax System* (Jan. 2009; pdf) and page 2 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Require greater transparency of the state's tax policy. Every year, New Mexico grants hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts, credits and incentives (called 'expenditures') with the expectation that jobs will be created. But nobody knows exactly how much money is lost to the state budget each year because of these policies, nor does anyone know what, if anything, we gain economically. It's our money; we have a right to know where it's going. For more information, see our reports *Economic Development Tax Credits in New Mexico: Are They Doing the Job?* (Sept. 2009) and *Moving Toward Revenue Policy Transparency in New Mexico* (Sept. 2006), and page 7 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Increase tax credits for low-income families, such as the Working Families Tax Credit, and index them to rise with inflation. For more information, see our page 11 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Simplify personal income tax credits, exemptions and deductions for low-income families so more working families can benefit from these anti-poverty measures.

- Reform or repeal of the Tax Increment for Development Act (TIDA) of 2006 to limit use of future state general fund monies in the development of greenfield areas. For more information, see our *TIDD FAQs* (updated Jan. 2009) and page 3 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Increase the tax on smokeless tobacco. Tobacco taxes have been increased on cigarettes, but chewing tobacco is often exempted. Taxing smokeless tobacco products would deter use by young people and raise revenues for medical care for those harmed by using tobacco products.
- Enact a modest increase in the motor vehicle excise tax.
- Increase alcohol taxes and tax so-called alcopops (flavored alcoholic beverages) at a higher rate than they are currently taxed.
- Allow the auction of carbon allowances to encourage a reduction of greenhouse gas production, with most of the proceeds going to energy assistance for low-income households.

Current Policies We Support:

- Ending the deduction of state and local taxes from the New Mexico tax return by those who itemized on their federal return. Enacted in 2010. For more information, see our policy brief *Plugging a Federal Drain on New Mexico's Income Tax Revenues* (Jan. 2010) and page 2 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Increasing the tax on cigarettes by 75 cents per pack. Studies have shown that tax increases discourage tobacco use, but only when they are in relatively large amounts. Small, incremental raises, like five or ten cents a pack, do not have this effect. Enacted in 2010. For more information, see our fact sheet *Potential Revenue Generators* (Aug. 2009).
- Creation of the Working Families Tax Credit. This refundable credit is available to those who qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) – one of the best anti-poverty programs ever enacted. Enacted in 2007 at 8% of the EITC; raised to 10% in 2008. For more information, see page 11 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Enactment of the Special Needs Adopted Child Tax Credit, which makes it more feasible for parents to adopt children with special needs. Enacted in 2007.
- Increasing tax exemptions for low-income tax filers. Enacted in 2007.
- Collecting severance taxes from crude oil, natural gas, and other minerals extracted from New Mexico lands.
- Passage of the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which was critical in keeping the recession from getting worse. Enacted in 2009. For more information, see our report *New Mexico's Economy and the Recovery Act* (Aug. 2009).

Policies We Oppose:

- Increases in the gross receipts tax (GRT) or narrowing of the GRT base. The GRT is our regressive tax. That means it falls hardest on low-income families because they must spend most or all of their income on day-to-day necessities. For more information, see our policy brief *Tax Fairness: Why We Need to Put Some Progressivity Back Into NM's Tax System* (Jan. 2009).
- Reducing so-called GRT pyramiding. Because separate components of an item that is manufactured in New Mexico are taxed, it is argued that such products are taxed multiple times. Such arguments ignore the fact that this so-called pyramiding is mitigated by tax credits for manufacturers.
- Enacting any tax expenditure limitations (TEs) or so-called taxpayer bill of rights (TABORs) that would arbitrarily limit government spending or tax collections. For more information, see our policy brief *TEs and TABOR: Why Limiting State Spending Puts Everyone in the Red* (May 2007).

- Enacting one-time or time-limited taxpayer dividends or rebates such as those issued in the 2008 special session.
- Making the Bush administration's federal income and estate tax cuts permanent. These tax cuts have led to unprecedented debt, cuts to vital programs like Medicaid and food stamps, and greater income inequality.

Issue Area: Reducing Poverty through a Living Wage and Other Work Supports

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#1**: No child lives in poverty; **#8**: Every family has safe, affordable housing and sufficient, nutritious food; and **#9**: Our economic development strategy provides for jobs that pay living wages, guarantee family leave, protect workers' rights, and provide access to education to improve skills and success in the workplace)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Index the state minimum wage so that it rises with inflation and allow cities and counties to enact minimum wage levels higher than the state's. For more information, see our report *Expand Opportunity to All New Mexicans: Raise State Minimum Wage to \$7.50 Indexed to Inflation* (updated Oct. 2006).
- Require that all employers offer paid sick days, paid medical leave, overtime pay for all hourly workers, pay equity for women and minorities, and non-discrimination policies.
- Increase funding to restore eligibility for childcare assistance to parents living at 200% of the federal poverty level. For more information, see page 10 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Raise the wage level at which families lose childcare assistance. Often, families are unable to accept pay raises because it would make them ineligible for benefits such as childcare assistance—even when the raise amount is less than the benefit that it would replace.
- Eliminate the one-week waiting period for those receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and increase weekly benefit amounts. For more information, see our policy brief *Unemployment Insurance Benefits Everyone* (May 2007).
- Extend workman's compensation to all full-time and season agricultural workers. Although they work in physically demanding and dangerous jobs, New Mexico's farm and dairy workers are not eligible to receive workman's compensation for lost wages if they are injured on the job.
- Dedicate a portion of Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) funds to incumbent worker training so New Mexicans can improve their skills and increase their earnings.
- Enact strong and accountable economic development programs that begin with a commitment to education and worker training.

Current Policies We Support:

- The statewide raise in the minimum wage to \$7.50 an hour. Enacted in 2007. For more information, see page 9 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series* and our report *Expand Opportunity to All New Mexicans: Raise State Minimum Wage to \$7.50 Indexed to Inflation* (updated Oct. 2006).
- Unemployment Insurance reform that increased benefits and added a weekly amount for those with dependent children. Enacted in 2003; benefits raised again in 2007. For more information, see page 14 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series* and our PowerPoint *Stimulating New Mexico's Economy and Helping Unemployed Workers* (Dec. 2006).

- The safeguarding of a woman’s right to use a breast pump in the workplace, which protects nursing mothers from employment repercussions for pumping breast milk and requires that employers provide space and flexible break time. Enacted in 2007.
- The right of all workers, including childcare workers, to collective bargaining and freedom to organize.
- Fair and adequate assistance to families in need via programs such as TANF, General Assistance, and SNAP, including the full staffing of such agencies to ensure that client needs are met in a timely and respectful manner.
- The federal Child Nutrition Act.

Policies We Oppose:

- So-called job training incentives that are really corporate giveaways.

Issue Area: Reducing Poverty by Helping Families Develop and Hold On To Assets

(**NM Children’s Charter** outcome **#1**: No child lives in poverty; and **#12**: Every family has access to appropriate credit, and predatory lending practices are abolished)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Limit the fees and interest that can be charged to consumers by payday, car title and tax refund lenders, as well as rent-to-own contracts, pawn shops, and certain college or job training program loans. Under current law, New Mexico does not limit fees and interest or regulate the length and term of consumer loans. Unscrupulous lenders often charge interest in excess of 300% APR. For more information, see page 1 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series* and our quick facts *The Truth About Payday Lending* (Jan. 2007).
- Add additional money to the Housing Trust Fund, which assists low-income families in buying a house, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which helps low-income families pay their utilities.
- Increase funding for programs serving homeless individuals and families.
- Increase funding for the state’s individual development accounts (IDA) program, which matches a low-income person’s savings to help them accrue assets.
- Require financial literacy as part of the state’s high school curriculum.
- Require that the expiration date is noted on store-issued gift cards and prohibit service fees.
- Increase funding for low-income legal services

Current Policies We Support:

- The regulation of payday lenders that capped loan fees at \$15.50 per every \$100 borrowed and disallowed loan rollovers. Although this was a big victory for consumers, the legislation did not go nearly far enough to curb these abusive practices. Enacted in 2007. For more information, see page 1 of our *2009 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- The requirement that companies providing financial services receive explicit written permission from consumers before sharing or selling their private information.

Policies We Oppose:

- The privatization of Social Security. The stock market crash of 2007 and the resulting recession are all the proof we need that critical safety nets like Social Security should not be subject to the whims of the market.

Core Value: Healthy Communities

Affordable health care, quality education, and safe neighborhoods for all

Issue Areas: Health Care; Education; Child Safety

A healthy community is one in which children and their parents have access to affordable health care, including preventive and mental health care, where children receive quality education that begins before elementary school, and children are safe from harm. In a health community, everyone is invested and involved, and neighbors work together to discourage crime and drug use.

Issue Area: Health Care

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#2**: Every child and adult has access to quality health care, including mental health care; **#13**: Our state has and enforces strong environmental laws that protect public health and the future of the planet)

Ongoing Priorities:

- Guarantee health care for everyone. Other developed nations have proven that it's not only possible, but it can be far better and less expensive than our health-care system. Nor does universal health care have to be the government-run single-payer systems of Canada and England. The states and the federal government must work together to ensure that everyone has coverage. Our future economic security depends upon it. For more information, see page 3 of our *2008 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Make health care premiums and co-pays affordable.
- Fully implement the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) to assure that all New Mexicans have access to health care.
- Require parity for mental and behavioral health care under private health insurance.
- Require that substance abuse treatment be covered by private health insurance.
- Fully fund Medicaid and the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) so that all eligible children can be enrolled. For more information, see our policy brief *Covering All Kids: A Good First Step Toward Universal Health Care* (Aug. 2008).
- Simplify enrollment and retention in Medicaid and CHIP.
- Fully fund all public health programs including those that provide immunizations for children and adults.
- Expand the number of school-based health centers (SBHCs), particularly in rural areas of the state, and grant them adequate funding. Children don't learn when they are at home sick and they are more likely to access health care when it is in a familiar setting. Parents do not lose any

authority over their child's health care and don't have to take time off from work so their children can see a doctor.

- Fully fund Medicaid waivers to end the waiting lists for those needing services under the Developmental Disabilities, Medically Fragile, Disabled and Elderly Waivers.
- Require that medical interpreters are available in all major hospitals for patients speaking Navajo, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Substantially increase state- and federal-level funding for programs serving Native Americans, such as Indian Health Services (IHS).
- Increase funding for programs to protect children from abuse and neglect, and prevention programs for bullying, youth suicide, and domestic violence.
- Fund tobacco-use prevention programs at the level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Increase the tax on smokeless tobacco. Tobacco taxes have been increases on cigarettes, but chewing tobacco is often exempted. Taxing smokeless tobacco products would deter use by young people and raise revenues for medical care for those harmed by using tobacco products.
- Enact publicly funded efforts to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity and diabetes.
- Enact and enforce higher standards for air, water and food safety.
- Fully fund and support age-appropriate sexual health services and education.
- Create and fully fund programs that reduce New Mexico's high teen pregnancy rate

Current Policies We Support:

- The passage of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), which initiated the process of health care and insurance reform. Although the package was far from perfect, it was landmark legislation that will set the stage for future reform and help reduce the federal deficit. Enacted in 2010.
- The 75-cents-per-pack tax increase on cigarettes. Studies have shown that tax increases discourage tobacco use, but only when they are in relatively large amounts. Small, incremental raises, like five or ten cents a pack, do not have this effect. Enacted in 2010. For more information, see our fact sheet *Potential Revenue Generators* (Aug. 2009).
- Passage of the Dee Johnson Clean Indoor Air Act, which protected more New Mexicans from exposure to second-hand smoke by making it illegal to smoke in most work environments, including most bars and restaurants. Enacted in 2007.
- Reauthorization of the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by Congress in 2007. For more information, see our report *The Crisis in Health Care and the Reauthorization of S-CHIP in the 2007 Congress* (Nov. 2006).
- Adequate funding of the SNAP program, food banks and school breakfast, lunch and dinner programs and efforts to simplify enrollment and retention in these programs.
- The federal Child Nutrition Act.
- Efforts to keep our air, water and food quality safe for all, especially children, who are most vulnerable to environmental contaminants.
- Criminal and juvenile justice programs that are based on reform and rehabilitation, and drug rehabilitation programs as alternatives to incarceration.
- A person's right to contraception and birth control at an affordable price and with privacy.

Policies We Oppose:

- Any additional cuts in eligibility or benefit levels for Medicaid and CHIP recipients.

- Allowing children to serve as medical interpreters for family members who do not speak English.
- The criminalization of tobacco use by underage youth. While NM Voices acknowledges that young people should not be using tobacco products, we do not believe that criminalizing children is an effective or appropriate action.
- Allowing the use of corporal punishment in schools.
- Initiatives seeking to try child criminal suspects as adults.
- Requiring original birth certificates to apply for Medicaid. Enacted by Congress as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, this was a misguided attempt to keep undocumented immigrants from receiving Medicaid—despite the fact that the U.S. Health and Human Services Department had already concluded that very few did. The upshot for parents is that they must now produce an original birth certificate or passport for their Medicaid-eligible children. This places one more unnecessary stumbling block between children and medical care.

Issue Area: Education

(**NM Children’s Charter** outcome **#3**: Every family has access to affordable, safe and high quality early childcare and education; **#4**: Every child has access to a public education system that is fully funded and in which resources are equitably distributed; **#5**: Every New Mexican can afford to go to college; and **#7**: Our youth have enough positive options available to them that they put off parenthood until they are older and economically independent)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Invest in quality early childcare and education to create a continuum of services, beginning at birth, that connect early childhood care and development programs with K-12 education. For more information, see our report *Early Childhood Supports in New Mexico: Challenges and Opportunities* (Updated 2010).
- Increase funding to restore eligibility for childcare assistance to parents living at 200% of the federal poverty level. For more information, see page 10 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Raise the wage level at which families lose childcare assistance. Often, families are unable to accept pay raises because it would make them ineligible for benefits such as childcare assistance—even when the raise amount is less than the benefit that it would replace.
- Increase funding for programs that improve the quality of childcare and early education programs such as Aim High, T.E.A.C.H. and WAGES. For more information, see our report *Improving Infant and Toddler Care and Education in New Mexico* (June 2006).
- Increase access to proven programs such as voluntary home visiting and pre-K. For more information, see our report *Improving Infant and Toddler Care and Education in New Mexico* (June 2006).
- Adequately fund elementary and secondary education programs so all New Mexico children receive a quality education.
- Increase support for out-of-school time programs such as service learning and community volunteerism, to provide greater opportunities for young people.
- Require financial literacy as part of the state’s high school curriculum.
- Require age-appropriate sexual health education as part of an overall effort to reduce teen pregnancy rates.

- Fully fund New Mexico’s college and universities and the College Affordability Fund for low-income students. For more information, see page 15 of our *2007 Legislative Briefing Series*.
- Invest more funding in adult basic education programs, English as a second language courses, and targeted workforce training. For more information, see our report *Bolstering the Basics: Helping New Mexico Families Work Their Way Out of Poverty* (Oct. 2010).

Current Policies We Support:

- The passage of SAFRA, which de-privatized the federal student loan program in order to lower interest rates and make loans available to more college students. Enacted in 2010.
- Programs that improve a parent’s involvement in their child’s education.
- New Mexico’s lottery scholarships.
- Mentoring, positive youth development, and other asset-building programs for youth.

Policies We Oppose:

- Abstinence-only programs, which have been proven to be ineffective.
- Allowing colleges to steer students toward particular lenders.

Issue Area: Child Safety

(**NM Children’s Charter** outcome #20: Every community is a safe, welcoming place for families and children)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Require gun manufacturers to put safety locks on all firearms. While no one thinks twice about buckling children into car safety seats, we fail our children by not requiring this simple, but effective, safety measure on guns. For more information, see our report *A Public Health Response to Youth Gun Violence* (Jan. 2003).
- Allow families to sue for damages when a child is injured or killed with a gun and the manufacturer is found to be negligent. Gun makers and sellers currently have legal immunity—even when they are found to be negligent. No other industry is provided this kind of legal immunity.
- Require the use of safety helmets by children when skiing, and limit child use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Current Policies We Support:

- Passage of the Child Helmet Safety Act, which requires that children wear helmets when bike riding and roller skating. Downhill skiing, however, was not included. Enacted in 2007.
- Enforcement of child car seat, booster seat, and seat belt usage laws.
- Enforcement of child labor laws.

Policies We Oppose:

- Expanding the scope of laws that allow more people to carry concealed weapons in more places. Enacted in 2010.

- Implementing and expanding youth curfew laws. While curfew laws are purported to be for the safety of children, studies indicate that children are most in harm's way in the after-school hours, not from midnight to 5am. Curfew laws do not protect children, but they do perpetuate negative images of young people as troublemakers.
- Gang affiliation registration, which does not create a deterrent to joining a gang. Such laws simply imply that certain youth are guilty by association and can lead to racial profiling.
- Enhancing penalties for crimes committed as a gang member or in an attempt to recruit other gang members.

Core Value: Human Rights

Equality is not limited by one's race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation; human dignity for all

Issue Areas: Racial Equity & Non-Discrimination; Immigration

New Mexico Voices for Children supports the recognition and civil rights of all persons and families, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender or gender identity. One way we do this is through our Race Matters work.

Issue Area: Racial Equity & Non-Discrimination

(NM Children's Charter outcome #18: No one experiences disparities in education, health, economic opportunity, housing, civil rights, self determination or personal power because of their race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Ensure equal rights for all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans-gender persons.
- Ensure the right of gay and lesbian couples to make a life-long civil commitment to each other. Such commitment strengthens a family and studies indicate that children thrive in households with same-gender parents.
- Require a racial impact analysis on all legislation similar to the environmental and small business impact reports that are currently required.
- Strengthen human trafficking laws and create support programs for victims.

Current Policies We Support:

- Repeal of the state death penalty, which has been shown to be administered much more often to black inmates than to white. Repealed in 2009.
- Prohibition of racial profiling by state law enforcement officials. Enacted in 2009.
- State and federal hate-crime legislation that add penalties to crimes committed on the basis of race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- The federal Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, ensuring that women and minorities receive equal pay for equal work. Enacted in 2009.
- The First Amendment separation of church and state which guarantees freedom of religion.
- Freedom of speech guarantees for university professors and students.
- Public access to the Internet and true Net neutrality.

- The repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, which will allow gay and lesbian service men and women to serve openly.

Policies We Oppose:

- The federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman for purposes of all federal laws. Enacted in 1996.
- Any legislation or constitutional amendment that would prohibit marriage or civil commitments between same-gender partners.
- Practices and policies that, when implemented, create an advantage for white people and a disadvantage for people of color.
- English-only laws.
- The FCC's 2010 ruling on Net neutrality that allows wireless providers to make some content more accessible.

Issue Area: Immigration

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#17**: All New Mexicans are assured protection of their human rights and civil liberties)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Enact a just and humane immigration policy that includes a path to citizenship.
- Pass the federal Dream Act, which provides a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who were brought to this country as children.

Current Policies We Support:

- Issuing New Mexico drivers licenses to all qualified drivers, regardless of immigration status.
- In-state tuition rates for legal immigrants who qualify as New Mexico residents.

Policies We Oppose:

- State compliance of the federal Real ID act.
- English-only laws.
- Arizona-type laws that give immigration enforcement powers to the states.
- Making it a felony to be in this country without documentation or to render humanitarian aid to an undocumented person.

Core Value: Civic Participation

Our collective and individual voices matter

Issue Areas: Elections & Voter's Rights; Ethics & Accountability

New Mexico Voices for Children believes everyone's voice has a place in our government. We support policies that encourage civic participation within communities and the government, and we keep our members informed about what's happening locally and

nationally with our e-Voices. We especially encourage participation of young people in the development of policies that impact them and their peers.

Issue Area: Elections & Voter's Rights

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#14**: All communities, regardless of diversity, size or place, have a voice in state government; **#15**: Our voter rights are protected and civic participation is encouraged; and **#16**: Our elected officials are held accountable through campaign finance reform and ethics laws)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Allow public financing of political campaigns for all state, city and county offices. Running for public office has become so expensive that only people with money or connections can afford to do so. Because of the expense, elected officials are more beholden to those who financed their campaigns than to those who voted them into office. Recent court rulings, determining that money equals free speech, serve to further disenfranchise vulnerable populations—children, low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled. When candidates have the option of running a publicly financed campaign, the field of candidates enlarges to include more women and minorities, and voters have the option of electing someone more likely to represent their best interests.
- Make certain that information about all private campaign contributions are easily and publicly accessible on the web.

Current Policies We Support:

- Limiting the amount of campaign contributions a candidate can receive from a single source and gifts that an elected official can receive. Enacted in 2009.
- Voting rights restoration for convicted felons who have completed their sentences.
- Programs such as the Youth Alliance that allow youths to be active participants in the government decision making process.

Policies We Oppose:

- Voter ID laws. Studies show that very little election fraud is actually perpetrated by people trying to vote more than once or representing themselves as someone they are not. Like a poll tax, voter ID laws are often an attempt to suppress voter participation and may place an economic burden on low-income people.
- The 2010 Supreme Court decision that allows unlimited corporate money in political campaigns.

Issue Area: Ethics & Accountability

(**NM Children's Charter** outcome **#16**: Our elected officials are held accountable through campaign finance reform and ethics laws)

Ongoing Policy Priorities:

- Require transparency in government budgeting, contracting, tax policy, and economic development incentives.
- Institute an independent ethics committee.
- Open up legislative conference committee hearings to the public.
- Web cast all House, Senate and interim legislative activities, including committee meetings.