



# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



**TRANSFORM**  
**EDUCATION**  
— NM —



## PURPOSE

We created this resource to help New Mexico families understand the advocacy process and how their lived experience and expertise can help influence legislation. The legislative process is complex, to say the least and was originally designed to be accessible only to a few. As one result of this, there are many acronyms and policy terms that may not be familiar to the public. See our list of resources below to help you navigate the legislative website as well as the legislative process.

## INFLUENCE

When many people think about who influences legislation, they think of well-paid lobbyists that represent corporate interests. Less so, people think about students, families and workers advocating for policy that is crafted for the good of the public. These voices, however, are the voices that should be centered during any debate and why it's critical that advocacy around good policy happens throughout the year. Everyday people can and should influence legislation.

New Mexico is unique in that we are the only unpaid legislature in the nation. Our legislators only have one administrative staff person during session and none assigned to them outside of that time frame, during the "interim". Much policy, however is discussed during this time, as "interim committees" meet across the state. When legislators go into "session", they pass bills, many of which are discussed during interim meetings.



New Mexico has alternating 60-day and 30-day sessions that begin in January. During 60-day sessions, any topic of legislation can be introduced and assigned committees. During 30-day sessions, however, only the budget is heard (always House Bill 2, or HB2) in addition to topics the Governor determines will be on "the call"- a narrow list of policy topics that can be heard. The exception to this rule are memorials and resolutions, which have no power of law, and constitutional amendments that, if passed, are only enacted if voted on by the public.



## RESOURCES

[NM Legislature Website](#)  
[Legislative Acronyms](#)  
[Legislative Terms](#)  
[Political Composition of Chambers](#)  
[Find/Contact My Legislator](#)  
[House Representatives](#)  
[Senate Members](#)

[Find Legislation by Number](#)  
[Find Legislation by Sponsor](#)  
[Make a List of Tracked Bills](#)  
[Daily Calendars \(during session only\)](#)  
[Webcast- watch live or view archived](#)

**Call your legislator: Switchboard #  
505-986-4300**



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## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

### Bill is introduced in the House or Senate

When a bill is “introduced” the Speaker of the House or Senate President Pro-Temp “reads it in” to the chamber. Then, the bill will be assigned to committees- there are usually two, but can vary.

### Committee 2

If the bill passes it’s first committee, then it can be scheduled in the second committee. The Chair of the second committee decides whether to “hear” the bill.

### Switches Chambers

Once a bill passes the chamber it started in, then it moves to the next chamber, where it is “read in” and the above process repeats.

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH



### Bill is filed

Before legislative session, bills are considered to be pre-filed. When session begins, bills can be filed regularly. Pre-filed bills usually have a lower bill number assigned to them and can be considered to be heard earlier in the session.

### Committee 1

Bills are typically assigned to committees relevant to the topic. If the Chair of the committee decides to “hear” the bill, it will be scheduled.

### Chamber Floor

After the bill passes the committees it was assigned, the entire chamber where it originated (House or Senate) will vote on the bill.

### Goes to the Governor

Once the bill passes both chambers, it is sent to the Governor’s desk for their signature. They can choose to sign it, veto it or “pocket veto” it. When a Governor vetoes a bill, they must give a reason. “Pocket vetoing” a bill means they take no action on it and the signing deadline passes and the bill fails to become law.



## BILL BECOMES A LAW!

When the Governor signs a bill, it becomes the law! Most bills will take effect the year after they are signed, unless the legislation named a different effect date.