



STEP ONE: Introduce a Bill

A member of the House of Representatives or the Senate can introduce a bill. The member who introduces the bill is called the sponsor. Anyone can co-sponsor a bill, including members from different political parties.



STEP THREE: Committee Hears the Bill

Committees study the bill and hold hearings where people testify in support of or in opposition to the bill. Members of the committee can suggest changes (called amendments) to the bill for the committee to consider.

After listening to public and expert testimony and proposed amendments, the committee will vote on the bill. If more than half of the committee members support the bill, it moves on to the next step. If the committee does not vote on the bill or the bill discussion is tabled in committee, the bill cannot move on. When this happens it is called “killing the bill.”

OUR VOICES: Strong Families New Mexico meets with potential sponsors to share our stories and helps inform the development of legislation as it is being created.

OUR VOICES: SFNM leaders and partners share their stories by testifying at committee hearings or participate in days of action. Can't make it to the capitol? Strong Families New Mexico supporters can call and/or email the members of the committee to express their support or share their concerns.

OUR VOICES: When a bill is being considered on the chamber floor, Strong Families leaders and partners participate in days of action, calling or visiting legislators to express their support or opposition to a bill. We may also show up at the Capitol building on the day of a floor vote to rally, speak to the media, and do in-person storytelling with legislators.



STEP FOUR: Floor Action

A bill that is sent by committee(s) with a “do pass” or “do not pass” recommendation returns to the chamber (House or Senate) where it is introduced for an up or down vote. This is called the third reading. During the third reading, the bill enters final debate on the full floor and amendments are discussed and voted on. Members vote to pass or not to pass the bill. Bills that do not pass on the third reading do not move on in the process.

If a bill passes in the House of Representatives, it goes through a similar process in the Senate. Before a bill becomes law, it must be approved by both chambers of the legislature. The bill must pass with the same wording in the House of Representatives and the Senate before it can go to the Governor for approval. If the Senate amends a House bill, or vice versa, the bill must go back to the original chamber and be approved with the amendments before proceeding. Sometimes, bills with different amendments end up in a conference committee where a small group of members from each chamber try to work out the differences.

STEP TWO: Send to Committee

Once introduced, a bill gets assigned a number and sent to a committee. Currently, the House of Representatives has 16 committees and the Senate has 9 committees. The number of committees may change depending on elected leadership.





STEP FIVE: Governor's Desk

If the bill passes both chambers, it goes to the Governor for approval. There are three possible outcomes.

1. Governor signs the bill.
2. Governor vetoes (or rejects) the bill. The House of Representatives and Senate may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of each chamber.
3. Governor takes no action. If the Governor does not sign or veto the bill by the end of the 20-day period, the bill is killed by what is called a "pocket veto."

OUR VOICES: While a bill is waiting for the Governor to make a decision, the SFNM network calls the Governor's office, sends emails, and participates in social media campaigns to urge the Governor to sign or veto the bill. Most bills that become laws take effect 90 days after the end of the legislative session, unless otherwise specified.

The New Mexico State Legislature has two legislative bodies—the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 70 members of the House of Representatives and 42 members of the Senate. The NM State Legislature meets every year starting on the third Tuesday in January for 60 days in odd years and 30 days in even years. Sixty-day sessions consider all legislative matters, while thirty-day sessions are limited to budgetary matters and items placed on the governor's agenda, or what is referred to as the Governor's "call."

A bill is an idea for a new law, or an idea to change or get rid of an existing law. Ideas for bills can come from anyone—legislators, community members, organizations, even corporations. Throughout the legislative process, Strong Families New Mexico (SFNM), along with our community leaders and partner organizations, engages in the process to make sure the voices of our families and communities count.

Strong Families New Mexico is changing policy so that all families in New Mexico can thrive. We focus on healthcare access, including comprehensive reproductive healthcare; the recognition and fair treatment of families of all kinds; and community safety approaches that prioritize prevention. Together with our supporters, SFNM ensures that politicians hear the voices of our families.



Strong Families New Mexico is a state-based advocacy and action program of Forward Together. SFNM brings together organizations and activists statewide to build strong communities and create policies that work for all families.

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HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW