



**NEW MEXICO IS AT A CROSSROADS
& IT'S TIME FOR A NEW DIRECTION**



WE ARE HERE

New Mexico's unique cultural diversity, great natural beauty, and enduring sense of community make it a resilient state. Our families, communities, and state are strongest when everyone has the same opportunities to get ahead.

But equality of opportunity only happens when our systems, policies, and programs work together to lay a foundation where all people have an equal chance to strive for success.

For too long, those systems, policies, and programs have not worked for everyone. Opportunities have been blocked for people of color for centuries. And hard-working families with low incomes are also left behind.

New Mexico has pursued a failed strategy of tax cuts for the wealthy and well-connected at the expense of everyone else. Those tax cuts have bled New Mexico of the funding we need for good schools, health care, and other services that help children and families succeed.

After years of these race-to-the-bottom economic strategies, we've reached rock-bottom - we're last in the nation for child well-being.

New Mexico is at a crossroads, and it's time for a new direction.

In our *Roadmap to a Stronger New Mexico*, we encourage elected officials to prioritize children in policymaking and budget decisions. We ask them to make the sometimes-tough decisions to put children and families first - because that's the best way to strengthen New Mexico.



To move forward, we must:

- Invest in working families.
- Grow good jobs by investing in education.
- Invest in health.
- Promote equity and ensure that our communities have the tools they need to prosper.
- Restore an effective and efficient government that works for everyone.

We're all in this together. Prioritizing New Mexico's children will make our communities, our economy, and our state stronger. It's not just the right and moral thing to do - it's also the smartest investment for New Mexico's future.

INVEST IN WORKING FAMILIES

Children do best when their families have economic security, which comes from good jobs and family-sustaining wages.

When there are simply not enough of those jobs to go around or when families fall on hard times, policymakers can enhance economic security for hard-working families with work supports that help provide the opportunities that children need to thrive.

Families also do best when they can build financial assets and invest in their own future. Policymakers can help families reach their goals through policies that protect them from unfair wage practices and predatory lending.



To support economic security for New Mexico's children and families, policymakers should:

WORK & WAGES

- Pursue an [economic development strategy](#) that: puts New Mexico's small businesses first; builds on our strengths, universities, and border trade; and focuses on the future by investing in education, infrastructure, broadband connectivity, water, and cutting-edge technology.
- Increase the [Working Families Tax Credit](#) and the Low Income Comprehensive Tax Credit.
- Enact a new state-level [Child Tax Credit](#) for low- and middle-income families with children.
- Increase the [minimum wage](#) to at least \$10 an hour immediately, and to at least \$12 an hour by 2022.
- Restore [child care assistance](#) to the previous eligibility level (200 percent of the federal poverty level) so more low-wage working parents can afford safe care for their kids. Within two years, increase eligibility again to help more working parents who continue to struggle with child care costs.
- Support [low-income housing](#), increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and pursue a comprehensive plan to reduce homelessness.

WORK SUPPORTS

- Establish [paid sick and family leave](#).
- Enroll all eligible families in Medicaid, the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), and child care assistance.
- Simplify the [enrollment and recertification processes](#) for Medicaid, SNAP, and child care assistance; and establish express-lane eligibility to reduce paperwork.
- Reject cost-sharing measures and reductions in benefits or income eligibility for Medicaid.

ASSET BUILDING

- Support a maximum APR of 36 percent on all small loans, and empower the Regulation and Licensing Department to [end predatory lending practices](#) in payday, car title, and tax refund loans, as well as pawn and rent-to-own schemes.
- Enact strong protections and enforcement for [equal pay](#).



INVEST IN EDUCATION

All children deserve a world-class education – and when they get it, society benefits. But when children from low-resource families start school already behind, they are unlikely to catch up. High-quality early care and learning programs are proven to help prepare children for success in school and in life – because when children are ready to start school, they are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college.

Funding cuts have caused enormous tuition increases at New Mexico's once-affordable colleges and universities. By putting post-secondary education out-of-reach for so many students, we've weakened our current and future economy.

We need to make sure all of New Mexico's kids have access to an affordable, quality cradle-to-career system of care and education.



To support education for New Mexico's children, policymakers should:

EARLY EDUCATION

- Significantly [increase funding](#) to achieve universal voluntary home visiting, child care assistance, and pre-k.
- Pass a constitutional amendment to use at least one percent of the [Land Grant Permanent Fund](#) for early education.
- Support evidence-based methods for closing achievement gaps at all stages of education.
- Expand community schools and other wraparound programs and strategies that help families and kids thrive.
- Increase funding for bilingual education to assure that all children have access to the program.
- Fully implement the Indian Education Act.

K-12 EDUCATION

- Substantially raise [K-12 per-pupil funding](#) and compensation for teachers and support staff.
- Ensure that schools where students have the highest needs receive more funding by increasing the at-risk factor in New Mexico's education funding formula.
- Increase funding for youth mentoring and out-of-school-time programs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Restore the [College Affordability Fund](#) so it can support at least \$2 million in need-based scholarships per year.
- Make the [lottery scholarship](#) need-based.
- Expand access to education for adults, including high school equivalency programs, service learning opportunities, [career pathways](#) for disconnected youth, [adult basic education](#), and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs.



INVEST IN HEALTH

Access to health care is a basic human right. And a person's health should not depend on their race, ethnicity, or zip code, but too often it does. Americans value the ideals of equality that are enshrined in our Constitution, but despite the progress we've made in health coverage, we are still a long way from true health equity. Policymakers should ensure that all New Mexico children and families have access to comprehensive, high-quality health care coverage and wellness resources.

For people to be healthy, their communities must also be healthy and safe. Crime and environmental pollution are just two of the problems that keep New Mexicans from living and thriving in safe, supportive communities.

To improve the health of New Mexico's children, families, and communities, policymakers should:

HEALTHY PEOPLE

- Support full implementation of all state provisions of the [Affordable Care Act](#) to improve access and achieve health equity.
- Fully fund [Medicaid](#) for all eligible New Mexicans and oppose barriers to access, such as cost-sharing premiums and co-pays, for most Medicaid recipients.
- Consider a Medicaid buy-in plan to make health care more affordable and accessible.
- End the Medicaid waiting list for those with developmental disabilities.
- Re-open the [school-based health centers](#) that were closed because of spending cuts, and support the creation of more school-based health centers.
- Increase funding for prevention programs that address child and teen suicide, tobacco use, teen pregnancy, and alcohol and drug use.
- Support age-appropriate sex education and access to birth control.
- Mandate expanded developmental, social, and emotional screening for young children.

HEALTHY & SAFE COMMUNITIES

- Pass common-sense [gun safety](#) legislation, including universal background checks and letting judges prohibit those accused of domestic violence from possessing firearms.
- Rebuild New Mexico's behavioral health system with an emphasis on access to [substance abuse treatment](#) programs.
- Support treatment instead of [incarceration](#) for non-violent drug offenders.
- Move rapidly toward more wind and solar energy and reduce harmful emissions from other energy sources.
- Require [methane capture](#).

INVEST IN EQUITY

New Mexico's cultural diversity is one of our best assets and a source of great pride. But diversity without equity is a broken promise. The government must represent everyone's needs. Basic human rights and democratic participation should never be limited by race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, family composition, or country of origin.

Unfortunately, true equity is still an unfulfilled promise. And when children face disparities because of how they look, what they believe, or who their families are, all our values are diminished.

To safeguard basic human and civil rights and to promote equity for all children and families in New Mexico, policymakers should:

NON-DISCRIMINATION

- Support LGBTQ people's rights and the state's non-discrimination act.
- Support driver's licenses for immigrants and a simplified process for obtaining a real-ID driver's license.
- Support sanctuary policies, including prohibiting state police from enforcing federal immigration laws.

DEMOCRACY

- Establish automatic voter registration.
- Oppose [voter ID laws](#) and any legislation or regulation that makes it more difficult for New Mexicans to exercise their right to vote.
- Aggressively support election protection measures to assure the integrity and reliability of the vote count.
- Support public financing of all legislative and statewide races.
- Support campaign contribution limits.





GETTING THERE FROM HERE

The roadmap alone won't get us where we want to be – we also need to put gas in the car.

We need to raise money to fill the tank. But we must raise these funds in a way that doesn't harm the very children and working families we want to help succeed. We can do this by closing tax loopholes, improving transparency, and asking the well-connected and big businesses to pay their share.

To achieve a fair tax system that generates sufficient revenue to help children thrive and succeed, policymakers should:

FAIRNESS & ADEQUACY

- Repeal ineffective and [wasteful tax breaks](#) for big corporations and the wealthiest earners that failed to create jobs and have forced deep cuts to [education, health care, and public safety](#).
- Repeal the [capital gains tax deduction](#).
- Raise [personal income tax](#) rates for those with higher incomes.
- Oppose taxing [food and nonprofits](#).
- Close tax loopholes that out-of-state corporations exploit so they don't have to pay taxes on their New Mexico profits by [mandating combined reporting](#).
- Enact a [health care provider fee](#) to maximize the dollars the state can draw from the federal government.
- Raise [alcohol and tobacco taxes](#) and include e-cigarettes.

- Extend the gross receipts tax to all [internet sales](#).
- Require [methane capture](#) and an increase in the statutory lease fees for state trust land, at least to the same level as Texas (from 18 percent to at least 25 percent).

TRANSPARENCY

- Support a comprehensive [tax expenditure report](#) and a repeal of taxpayer confidentiality laws that interfere with evaluating the consequences of tax breaks.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of all energy, mining, and natural resource taxes and fees to assure that they are updated to reflect our state's economy, reduce our impact on climate change, and preserve our natural resources and heritage.



GET INVOLVED

Read more at StrongerNewMexico.org

 @NMVoicesforChildren

 @NMVoices

 @nmvoices

ROADMAP TO A.
STRONGER
NEW MEXICO

NEW MEXICO
VOICES
FOR CHILDREN