



**NEW MEXICO FIRST**

*People. Ideas. Progress.*

**New Mexico First & Share NM Newsletter**  
**Stay Informed & Engaged**  
**February 16, 2021**

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**Update from the Roundhouse**

**2021 Session New Mexico First Legislative Priorities.** In the 2021 Legislative Session, New Mexico First will be supporting legislation that received cross partisan consensus through our town halls, community conversations and collaborations. [This list](#) will be updated as the session progresses.

For tips on how you can participate in this virtual legislative session, visit the [NM Advocacy Alliance](#) website.

Please attend the [House Agriculture and Water Conservation Committee](#) on 2/18 to support [HB 207](#). Over 400 stakeholders have provided input to the development of the Food, Hunger and Farm Bill. This legislation was a cross-sector, statewide effort that is designed to strengthen local food systems and responses to food insecurity. NM has the highest hunger rates among children in the nation and our seniors are the third hungriest. 90% of the farming and ranching operations in New Mexico have an annual revenue below \$50,000. By working together we can fight hunger.

[House Bill 211](#) and [Senate Bill 199](#) are based on the [recommendations](#) that the New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force developed in the Fall of 2020. (Xavi, please insert external link to the report) Over 140 stakeholders were nominated or self-nominated to serve on this Task Force which was chaired by retired Chief Supreme Court Justice Ed Chavez and retired Chief Appellate Court Judge Rod Kennedy. Task Force members represented communities across New Mexico and were racially, ethnically, culturally, politically, and gender diverse. The recommendations include an emphasis on adhering to the Voting Rights Act, respectful inclusion in the mapping process of diverse stakeholders and communities of interest, and practical strategies to support the legislature in selecting maps that have the best interests of voters in mind. This is done through codifying rules and processes and establishing an independent commission to bring greater fairness, openness, and transparency to political redistricting. Last week the House version passed from its first committee with broad cross-partisan support.

New Mexico First is supporting several broadband pieces of legislation that are aimed at strengthening equity and reliable access. Most recently, equitable broadband strategies arose as key recommendations in our 2020 Health Body, Mind, and Spirit Town Hall. However, equitable and reliable broadband access has emerged across public policy discussions about education, economic and community development, and natural resources as well. We're advocating for HB 10, HB 141, HB 86, and SB 93.

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**Feeding New Mexico.** Getting food on the tables of New Mexicans depends on a complex food system that encompasses everything from seed to plate: production, packaging, distribution, preparation, and consumption, all shaped by economic and political decisions. The system includes many moving parts, where a connection means food is on the table and a disconnection may mean that New Mexicans go hungry. Since 2019, the non-partisan, cross-sector [Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Work Group](#) has worked to advance policies that strengthen local food systems and eliminate hunger in New Mexico. Check out the group's [Food, Hunger and Agriculture Legislative Priorities](#) for the 2021 session.

Meanwhile, work on the ground continues. This week, we're highlighting **Grant County**. The [National Center for Frontier Communities](#), located in Silver City, was propelled into action on food systems as increased globalization threatens small farmers, greater distances in our rural and frontier communities limit access to healthy food, and the need for emergency and supplemental food increases. The [Southwest New Mexico Food Hub](#) supports local food producers with marketing, coordination, and distribution services, purchases bulk food items from producers, and distributes healthy foods to local food

pantries at a reduced cost. For more information or to become a supplier or buyer, contact Ben Rasmussen at (575) 597-0032 or [brasmussen@swchi.org](mailto:brasmussen@swchi.org).

The [Silver City Farmers' Market](#) is another connecting link in the food system. The Saturday morning markets are continuing as an essential business, following COVID-19 safe guidelines set by the Governor. The Market's [Double Up Food Bucks](#) program doubles SNAP benefits for low-income neighbors with limited food budgets so that they are able to provide more fresh and nutritious food for their families.

The Food Hub and Farmers' Market are working with other community partners to offer the [Grant County Seed Library](#), a place for people to "check-out" seeds to grow, like a book. The library goes one step further by allowing people to "return" or donate seeds gathered in the area for others to plant. "Seeds are the building blocks of food security, and when a seed is grown locally the resulting plants are stronger and more acclimatized to our region," Silver City Farmers' Market (SCFM) Manager Andrea Wagner said. For more information, contact Andrea at [maderocupco@gmail.com](mailto:maderocupco@gmail.com) or Ben Rasmussen, [brasmussen@swchi.org](mailto:brasmussen@swchi.org).

Find [food resources](#) in Grant in SHARE's Resource Directory.

**Brighter Futures Fund Grant Opportunity.** The New Mexico Oil & Gas Association (NMOGA) and the Albuquerque Community Foundation announce the first round of funding for 2021. Grants from the Brighter Future Fund will focus on three areas: Education, Economic Opportunity and Hunger. The first grant round of 2021 will focus on the Northern region of New Mexico; future rounds in 2021 will focus on Central New Mexico and Southern New Mexico. **Deadline: February 18<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 PM.** [See Guidelines](#)

**Nurturing Soil for a Healthy Climate.** On February 24<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 PM, Fidel Gonzalez & Matthew Draper will share strategies to steward soil health for farm production and climate health. Fidel Gonzalez, president of Agri-Cultura Network, has been farming since 2009 and will share his experience of the benefits of low till in New Mexico. Matthew Draper, the farm manager of North Valley Organics, has been farming since 2015 and will share cover cropping techniques and a crop planning system to grow healthy soil and an economically viable farm. For more information, email Sayrah Namaste at [sNamaste@afsc.org](mailto:sNamaste@afsc.org).

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# COVID-19

## *Information, Resources & Updates*

**Moving to Green!** We're making progress, New Mexico! The [latest update](#) from the New Mexico Department of Health for the two-week period ending February 8<sup>th</sup> shows four counties now **in the green**: Harding, Union, Catron and Sierra. Another 15 counties have moved into the yellow zone. What does this mean?

- Green Zone: Most businesses can operate at 50% capacity; outdoor dining at 75% capacity, and businesses that have completed [NM Safe Certified training](#) at 75% capacity. Mass gatherings limited to 20 people or 120 vehicles.
- Yellow Zone: Most businesses can operate at 25% capacity; outdoor dining at 75% capacity, and businesses that have completed NM Safe Certified training at 60% capacity. Mass gatherings limited to 10 people or 80 vehicles.
- [Track your county's progress](#) towards a safe opening.

**Resiliency Support for First Responders.** First responders are the primary frontline professionals responding to emergencies and are the difference between life and death for patients and community members. The COVID-19 global pandemic is impacting them in unprecedented ways. ECHO has launched a free program that brings front-line workers from around the nation to share real cases and situations, identify best practices and receive support from peers, physicians, and mental health experts. Join in every Monday from 2:00-3:00. No-cost continuing education credits. [Learn more.](#)

**Masks Work! Two Masks Work Better!** In spite of the progress we're making, we still need to keep up with COVID-19 safe practices, including social

distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and wearing masks -- correctly. A new study from CDC found that wearing a well-fitting mask or wearing a cloth mask over a surgical mask can reduce the transmission of virus droplets by 95%. [Learn more.](#)

**You've tested positive for COVID-19. Now What?** First, don't panic! We know much more about COVID-19 and how to treat it. You'll need to isolate for at least 10 days, depending on your situation. See [full instructions](#). Learn about monoclonal antibody treatment and [see if you are eligible](#).

**Vaccinations.** According to DOH Secretary Collins, NM is ranked in the top 2 or 3 states for getting shots in arms. Vaccinations are available for New Mexicans in [Phase IB](#). **You must register** for a COVID-19 vaccination at [vaccinenm.org](http://vaccinenm.org). When the vaccine is available to you, NMDOH will send you a notification and event code to schedule your appointment. You can register online or by phone. Keep track of how we are doing; check the NM [COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard](#).



*Credit: Leah Romero, for the Las Cruces Sun Times*

**The Good News Report!**

**Las Cruces Seniors Beat COVID!** Residents of Calibre Sagecrest Nursing and Rehabilitation Center enjoyed parades and interacting with family last Friday. Residents celebrated being COVID-free for three weeks after most of the residents have been vaccinated. Leah Romero was there and shares [the good news story](#). *Note: Masks should cover the nose and mouth! We'll assume a little slippage here.*

Do you have a good news story? We all need to hear it! Send it to [wendy@nmfirst.org](mailto:wendy@nmfirst.org).

### Tip for Civic Engagement

Participating in the legislative process is different in many ways this year but some things are enduring. I've heard several people grieve the face-to-face access at the Roundhouse that our citizen legislature affords in non-pandemic times. People miss visiting with legislative staff and lively conversations with legislators about policy issues that matter to New Mexicans. We've also witnessed people participating remotely who may not have been able to afford the time or travel costs and the virtual environment has reduced barriers to participation for some. There are definitely trade-offs, but what is remarkable is the resilience of New Mexicans regardless of role.

Policy makers, community members, and advocates are sharing their stories, building understanding, and developing policies that hold promise for a stronger, healthier, New Mexico. One of the enduring qualities in this session is a clear and deep love for New Mexico across political perspectives. Do you want to know what's happening and weigh-in on issues that matter to you, your family, and your neighbors? Visit [nmlegis.gov](http://nmlegis.gov). You can search legislation by keyword, read proposed legislation, and click to find out when the bill will be discussed and how to participate. Making a difference it right at our fingertips and the only qualifications you need are your story, your wisdom, and the desire to make New Mexico better.

This tip is authored by New Mexico First President and Executive Director, Lilly Irvin-Vitela. She can be reached at [lilly@nmfirst.org](mailto:lilly@nmfirst.org).

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### **Our Mission. Our Values.**

#### **Our Mission**

To be a catalyst for positive change by engaging citizens in policy and enabling action.

#### **Our Core Values**

Meaningfully engaging New Mexicans in public policy; Striving for and respecting consensus; Pursuing and respecting diverse points of views; Ensuring inclusion and transparency; Rising above partisan politics; Changing policy to improve people's lives; Creating an informed citizenry that is powerfully motivated; Reaching out statewide including rural and tribal communities; Partnering with others; Promoting civility and Democracy at its best!

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