



New Mexico



State Capitol



Welcome to the New Mexico State Capitol!

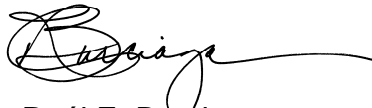
We are excited about your interest in our State Capitol! Please take this opportunity to tour the buildings and grounds, and if you are here during a legislative session, we encourage you to observe floor sessions or committee meetings.

Take time to enjoy the architecture and art that the Capitol has to offer, which reflect New Mexico's unique culture. The vast art collection is managed by the Capitol Art Foundation and includes works displayed in the Capitol, the Capitol North and the walkway that connects the two. The walkway is accessible from the first floor of the Capitol, from Capitol North and from Don Gaspar. Capitol North is also accessible from Don Gaspar.

The Capitol, also known as the Roundhouse, and the Capitol North are operated by the Legislative Council Service (LCS) and are home to the Office of the Governor, the Secretary of State, the Legislative Finance Committee, the Legislative Education Study Committee, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the LCS. The 112 members of the New Mexico Legislature occupy the building throughout the year, during the annual legislative session and during the interim to attend committee meetings.

Finally, we feel that understanding the legislative process is important, and for this reason we have prepared this booklet in an effort to make your visit more enjoyable.

Sincerely,



Raúl E. Burciaga
Director
Legislative Council Service



Visiting the Legislature

The legislature welcomes visitors and guests to its legislative sessions. The Roundhouse is located at the corner of Old Santa Fe Trail and Paseo de Peralta. Free parking is available in the parking structure west of the Capitol, accessible from Galisteo Street, and in front of the Capitol, accessible from Paseo de Peralta.

During session, your legislators will want to know when you are visiting, so it is a good idea to call your legislators' offices in advance and let them know your plans. If you are with a group and want to ensure that you have seats in the house or senate gallery to observe legislative proceedings, contact the chief clerk of each house and specify the day and time of your arrival.



A few rules should be observed when visiting the legislature.

- ✦ Applause or loud talking is not allowed in the galleries or committee rooms.
- ✦ Food or drink is not allowed in the galleries or committee rooms.
- ✦ Visitors are not permitted on the floor of the chambers while the legislature is in session.
- ✦ Smoking is not allowed in the Capitol or Capitol North.

Information kiosks are located at the Capitol's east and west entrances, and building directories are located near the elevators on every level. An information desk is located in the east lobby. The knowledgeable staff working there will assist you with questions and direct you around the building. During legislative sessions, agenda boards are located outside of each committee room and contain notices of committee meetings.



You may also want to check the calendar on the legislature's web site (www.nmlegis.gov) for special days and events.

During legislative sessions, the billroom/mailroom, located on the first level by the east elevator, offers copies of legislation at a nominal price. The billroom also sells the Daily Bill Locator, a publication that tracks the status of every bill, memorial and resolution. Copies of the daily calendar, committee lists, names and addresses of legislators and other materials are also available here. In addition, this is where mail and messages for legislators are received and distributed.

For information on touring the Capitol, call (505) 986-4589.

Legislative Organization & Members

The organization of the New Mexico Legislature is similar to those in most states of comparable size and population.

The 112 members of the legislature are divided into two chambers — the house of representatives, composed of 70 members, and the senate, composed of 42 members. Representatives must be 21 years old, and senators must be 25 years old. Legislators must be citizens of the United States and live in the districts from which they are elected. Legislators are elected from districts of approximately equal population. A large county, such as Bernalillo County, has many districts, and several counties with small populations are combined to form a single district.

Members of the house of representatives run for office every two years, while members of the senate are elected for four-year terms.

Each chamber has leadership positions served by individual legislators. The most powerful leader in the house of representatives is the speaker of the house, who is elected by a



vote of the entire house. The speaker appoints members to the house committees, including the chairs and vice chairs. The speaker is the presiding officer of the house and controls its procedural strategy and administration.

The other leaders of the house are party leaders and are selected by party caucuses. The party leaders are the majority floor leader, the majority whip, the minority floor leader and the minority whip. Their primary purpose is to see that the interests of their respective parties in the house are well-served.

In the senate, leadership and administrative control are exercised by the Senate Committees' Committee rather than by a single officer. This committee, which is composed of majority and minority leaders, duplicates some of the powers and functions of the speaker of the house. The committee is chaired by the president pro tempore of the senate, who is elected to that position by the full senate. As provided in the Constitution of New Mexico, the lieutenant governor is the presiding officer of the senate and, when serving in that capacity, is called the president of the senate. The lieutenant governor is a member of the executive branch of government and can vote only in the case of a tie.

New Mexico legislators do not receive a salary for their public service. However, legislators do receive a per diem and mileage reimbursement. Article 4, Section 10 of the Constitution of New Mexico sets compensation for representatives and senators as follows:
"Each member of the legislature shall receive:

- A. per diem at the internal revenue service per diem



rate for the city of Santa Fe for each day's attendance during each session of the legislature and the internal revenue service standard mileage rate for each mile traveled in going to and returning from the seat of government by the usual traveled route;

- B. per diem expense and mileage at the same rates as provided in Subsection A of this section for service at meetings required by legislative committees established by the legislature to meet in the interim between sessions; and
- C. no other compensation, perquisite or allowance."

The Legislature at Work

By law, the New Mexico Legislature convenes in regular sessions in Santa Fe at 12:00 noon on the third Tuesday in January of each year. The legislature holds 60-day sessions in odd-numbered years and 30-day sessions in even-numbered years. The chart below illustrates the corresponding dates.

The governor may call the legislature into a special session. The only matters that may be considered in a special session are those contained in the governor's proclamation calling the session. The legislature may call itself into an extraordinary session. In May 2002, the legislature convened in an extraordinary session; this was the first time in New Mexico's history that the legislature had used this power.

Year	Session	Opening Day	Closing Day
2013	51st, First Session	January 15	March 16
2014	51st, Second Session	January 21	February 20
2015	52nd, First Session	January 20	March 21
2016	52nd, Second Session	January 19	February 18



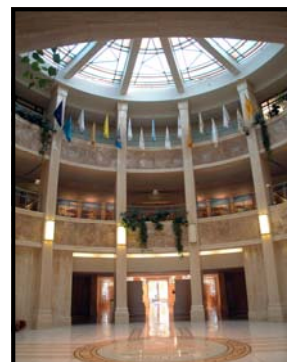
www.nmlegis.gov

Daily sessions of the house and senate begin with a roll call of members. Traditionally, floor sessions are held nearly every day and last until the immediate business to be considered is finished. Committee meetings are generally scheduled to prevent conflict with the floor sessions. The floor sessions held at the beginning of a legislative session are usually short, as legislation is being drafted and considered by committees, but toward the end of a session, floor sessions usually become longer, lasting into the late afternoon and evening.

Some of the activity during floor sessions is necessary daily administrative routine, and at these times, legislators may be away from their desks. Some may be presenting and testifying on their own bills before house and senate committees. Others may be involved in conferences with other members or meeting with constituents who are visiting the Capitol.

The chief clerk, the assistant chief clerk, the journal clerk, the reading clerk, the secretaries and the bill historian sit at long desks just below the podium where the speaker and the president sit in their respective houses. The chief clerks, who are elected by the members of the respective houses, are responsible for keeping a daily record of all matters coming before the legislature and for all legislative documents. They are also in charge of housekeeping matters; that is, they interview prospective employees and supervise staff work, purchase supplies, assign space and generally take care of the many details connected with a legislative session.

When the legislature is in session, news reporters are allocated space in rooms overlooking the chambers.



The large boards on the walls on each side of the house chamber are part of an electronic roll call system. Members vote electronically from their desks, and the vote is displayed on the wall boards within seconds.

Many people visit the legislature at work. Some come merely to observe the proceedings, while others have an interest in particular legislation. Representatives of organized groups, called lobbyists, are there for the purpose of looking after the interests of their particular group. They keep track of pending legislation and attempt to influence the attitudes and opinions of legislators. In New Mexico, lobbyists must be registered with the secretary of state.

Standing Committees

Standing committees, which meet during sessions to consider legislation on one subject, play an important role in ensuring that proposed legislation is given a fair hearing.

Committee membership is largely determined by the preferences of individual legislators. Care is taken to place members on committees in which their previous experience and training can be used. For example, members of the judiciary committees may be lawyers, or teachers may serve on the education committees. In the house of representatives, the speaker appoints the committee members and the committee chairs; and in the senate, appointments are made by the Senate Committees' Committee. Senators serve on two substantive committees, except that members serving on the Senate Finance Committee do not serve on any other substantive committee (Senate Rule 9-3). Representatives serve on no more than two substantive standing committees (House Rule 9-3).

Other committees deal with administrative matters. These include House Enrolling and Engrossing, House Printing



and Supplies, House Rules and Order of Business and Senate Committees' Committee.

Each piece of legislation is generally referred to two or three committees. In the house of representatives, legislation is referred to committees by the speaker; in the senate, by the bill's sponsor, subject to the approval of the senate. After a piece of legislation has been referred to a committee, it is scheduled for consideration by the committee chair. Committee hearings are open to the public, and interested parties may testify in favor or in opposition to a proposal. Upon completion of discussion and testimony, the committee makes its decision on the legislation and reports its recommendation to the full house or senate. Members of the legislature rely heavily on a committee's judgment when they consider the adoption of a committee's report.

Interim Committees

Legislators also serve on interim committees, which meet between legislative sessions to consider and study a variety of issues. Interim committees consist of both house and senate members and, except for the Legislative Education Study Committee and the Legislative Finance Committee, which have their own staffs, are staffed by the Legislative Council Service.

Interim committees, which often meet throughout New Mexico, generally meet from June through November. More information about interim committee meetings can be found on the legislature's web site: www.nmlegis.gov.



Types of Legislation

Members consider a variety of matters during a legislative session that are drafted into three types of legislation:

A **bill** is the form of legislation used to propose laws. A bill may originate in either house, but in order to become law, it must be passed by both houses and signed by the governor. By custom, a general appropriations act, which appropriates the money to fund state government, originates in the house, but there is no legal requirement that it do so.

A **resolution** is a formal declaration of the legislature concerning some subject that it either cannot control, or does not wish to control, by law. Resolutions are joint, concurrent or simple, and they require no action on the part of the governor. A joint resolution can propose an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico and if passed, voted on by New Mexico voters. Joint resolutions are also used to express the will of the legislature, such as approving the sale, trade or lease of state-owned real property. Concurrent resolutions are used for the purpose of adopting or amending joint rules of the legislature. Simple resolutions are seldom used.

A **memorial** is an expression of legislative desire that is usually addressed to another governmental body in the form of a petition or declaration of intent. For example, a memorial may ask the Department of Transportation to build a road in a certain part of the state or a legislative interim committee to study a particular issue. Joint memorials are passed by both houses; simple memorials are an expression of only one house.

Legislative Process

1. **Introduction.** Only legislators may introduce legislation. After legislation has been drafted and prepared for introduction, it is presented to the chief clerk, who assigns it



a number. The reading clerk reads it twice by number and title along with the name of the principal sponsor. Legislation is typically assigned to the appropriate standing committees for further study. With some exceptions, bills must be introduced by the halfway mark of each session, whereas resolutions and memorials can be introduced until the end of session.

2. **Committee Action.** Most consideration of legislation in New Mexico is done in committees. It is here that the public has the opportunity to testify in favor or in opposition to it. After considering the testimony, the committee can take one of several actions. It may:
 - a) recommend to the legislative body that a piece of legislation DO PASS, DO PASS AS AMENDED or DO NOT PASS, or refer the bill back to the floor WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION;
 - b) substitute a new and similar piece of legislation for the original piece, incorporating changes the committee wishes to make;
 - c) recommend referral of the legislation to another committee; or
 - d) simply do nothing and let the bill die by not reporting it out of committee.

Committee reports are subject to adoption by the full house or senate.

3. **Final Passage.** When legislation is called for its third reading, members may debate its pros and cons on the chamber floor. Amendments may be added at this stage, or the legislation may be substituted by another piece similar to it. The sponsor of the bill is allowed to close debate by speaking last. A final vote is taken and recorded.
4. **Sent to the Other House.** If the legislation receives a favorable vote, it is sent to the other house, where it follows much the same procedure.



5. **Concurrence**. Legislation that is amended in the second house must be sent back to the first house for agreement. This is called concurrence. If concurrence is denied, the second house votes on whether to recede, or withdraw, from its amendment. If the second house fails to recede, the bill is usually sent to a conference committee to work out a version agreeable to both houses. The report of the conference committee must be agreed to by both houses in order for the legislation to pass.
6. **Enrolling and Engrossing**. When both houses of the legislature have agreed on the final version of a piece of legislation, it is enrolled and engrossed, with all of its amendments incorporated, and the presiding officers of both houses sign the legislation. Bills are then sent to the governor for consideration.
7. **Governor's Approval or Veto**. The governor may sign the bill, in which case it becomes law, or the governor may veto the bill, in which case it does not become law unless the legislature overrides the governor's veto. A bill received by the governor during the last three days of a legislative session is automatically vetoed — in what is known as a "pocket veto" — if the governor does not sign it within 20 days of the legislature's adjournment. On the other hand, a bill received by the governor with more than three days left in the session automatically becomes law, even without the governor's signature, unless it is vetoed.
8. **Laws**. Not all laws go into effect at the same time. Some bills carry emergency clauses and become effective as soon as the governor signs them, some become law 90 days after the legislature adjourns and others take effect at the start of the next fiscal or calendar year.



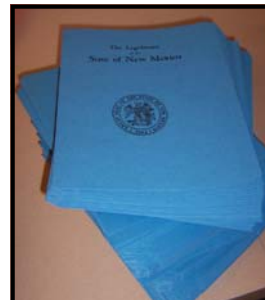
The Legislative Council Service

The Legislative Council Service (LCS) was established by law in 1951 to provide year-round staff services for legislators. Bill drafters, researchers, librarians, proofreaders, word processors, print service operators and other employees provide a multitude of services for members of the legislature.

The LCS prepares all of the legislation that is introduced in the legislature. This drafting service is provided to every legislator, to interim and standing committees and to state agencies and public institutions. In addition, at the request of a legislator, the LCS will assist in the preparation of bill drafts for private groups and citizens.

The LCS maintains a legislative reference library covering almost any subject on which a legislator might need information. The LCS also does general housekeeping chores for the legislature and its committees, particularly during the interim when the legislature is not in session. It maintains the legislative buildings and grounds through the Legislative Building Services staff, maintains the equipment and furniture belonging to the legislature, forwards mail, answers correspondence upon requests from legislators, provides staff and bookkeeping services for interim committees, schedules meetings, provides information technology services and provides printing services. The LCS is also in charge of the joint billroom/mailroom services provided during the legislative session.

A 16-member permanent legislative interim committee, the New Mexico Legislative Council, serves as the board of directors for the LCS. Its statutory members are the speaker of the house, the minority floor leader of the house, the president pro tempore, the minority floor leader of the



senate and six representatives and six senators chosen proportionally from both political parties.

Legislative Education Study Committee

The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), which was created in 1965 as a permanent committee of the New Mexico Legislature, and its staff are authorized by statute to conduct a continuing study of public education and laws governing education in New Mexico as well as the policies and costs of the New Mexico educational system. The committee is also responsible for recommending changes in laws relating to education and reporting its findings and recommendations.

The LESC is composed of legislators appointed to provide proportionate representation of both houses and political parties. Assisted by a permanent staff, the committee meets regularly during the interim to study education issues. To fulfill its statutory responsibilities, the LESC provides legislators with objective information pertaining to New Mexico public schools as well as state and national education trends.

LESC staff members provide support for all of the committee's functions, conduct research, prepare reports and present findings and recommendations to the committee at its regularly scheduled meetings. Staff members also assist individual legislators in assembling and presenting information about education and analyzing potential education legislation.

Finally, the LESC serves as a resource to New Mexico residents, state and national organizations, education policymakers, local school districts and education agencies.



The major responsibilities of the LESC staff during legislative sessions are to assist the education committees of the house and senate as well as other committees by providing analyses of public school-related legislation and by supplying technical support in the development of public school support appropriations. Staff members prepare statistical and graphical analyses of both financial and program aspects of the New Mexico educational system.

Legislative Finance Committee

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) was established in 1957 as a fiscal and management oversight arm of the New Mexico Legislature. Since its inception, the role of the committee and its staff in the state budget process has grown as the complexity and size of the budget has increased. The committee makes budgetary recommendations to the legislature for the funding of state government, higher education and public schools. The committee also prepares legislation addressing financial and management issues of state government.

New Mexico is unusual in that both the governor and an agency of the legislature (the LFC) propose comprehensive state budgets to the full legislature.

The Roundhouse

New Mexico claims the distinction of having the oldest as well as one of the newest state capitols in the United States. The oldest is the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, built in 1610 and the seat of government for nearly three centuries — under Spanish, Mexican and American administrations.

The Capitol, otherwise referred to as the Roundhouse, was dedicated in December 1966 and underwent extensive remodeling in 1991. Built in traditional Territorial style and resembling the Zia sun symbol (which appears on the state



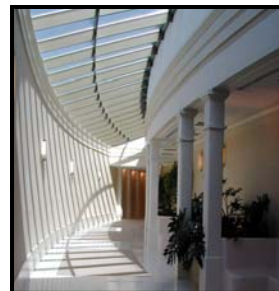
flag), the building consists of four levels. The first level contains the house and senate chambers, legislative offices, the billroom/mailroom, lounges and underground parking.

The second level is the area visitors see when they enter the building. The great rotunda soars to the glass-enclosed dome above, and its floor is inlaid with the Great Seal of the State of New Mexico. Visitors can peruse the exhibits in the Hall of History or watch the legislature at work from the house or senate gallery. A visitors' information service is located near the east entrance to provide assistance and building information. The second level also contains legislative office space, offices for the Legislative Building Services staff, offices for the news media and a coffee shop.

The third level contains house and senate committee rooms and legislative office space. From the third-level balcony overlooking the rotunda floor, visitors can see the cream pillars and walls of New Mexico marble quarried 20 miles west of the Rio Grande in central New Mexico.

The fourth level is devoted to the governor's suite, the lieutenant governor's offices, the staff of the LCS and legislative office space.

The adjacent Capitol North was completed in 2000 and is connected to the main capitol by a walkway, shown here. The Secretary of State, Administrative Office of the Courts, LESC, LFC and additional house legislative office space are located here.



Communicating with Your Legislator

Writing letters or emailing can be very effective means of making legislators aware of your opinions on legislation. Write to legislators prior to or during the time the matter is being considered, and do not hesitate to write to the chair of a committee that is considering legislation in which you are interested.

During sessions, your legislators will be extremely busy. Consider making an appointment in order to make your visit more successful. State your points as clearly and as briefly as possible and give specific examples to support your opinion. Be willing to listen to the views of others who may disagree with you.

The New Mexico Legislature's web site (www.nmlegis.gov) offers a wide range of information. You may view a legislator's contact information and find legislation, calendars, agendas and other information about important issues facing the state.



History of New Mexico

New Mexico, the forty-seventh state to join the Union, has the nation's oldest historical record, dating from about 1534, when Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca traveled through this land. His report and a subsequent exploration by Fray Marcos de Niza led to the conquest of New Mexico by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his Spanish conquistadores in 1540. General Stephen Watts Kearny occupied New Mexico for the United States in 1846. The Territory of New Mexico, established in 1850, included all of present-day Arizona, along with parts of Utah, Nevada and Colorado. New Mexico was granted statehood on January 6, 1912.



The State...

Aircraft

The hot air balloon became the official state aircraft in 2005. New Mexico is known for its annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, a festival bringing balloonists from around the world who wish to experience the "Albuquerque Box" pattern. In this pattern, pilots are able to launch through the wind blowing predictably north at one elevation and south at another. Pilots can fly great distances, change altitude and land near their launch sites. The Balloon Fiesta began in 1972, although hot air ballooning began in the state nearly a century ago.



Flag

The first flag of New Mexico statehood was designed by historian Ralph Emerson Twitchell in 1915. It consisted of a blue field with a miniature United States flag in the upper left corner, the state's Great Seal in the lower right corner and "New Mexico" embroidered diagonally across the field from the lower left to the upper right.



In 1923, the New Mexico chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a flag design competition that was won by Dr. Harry Mera and his wife, Reba, of Santa Fe. In March 1925, Governor Arthur T. Hannett signed legislation proclaiming the Mera design as the official state flag.

The flag features a "Zia" — a modern interpretation of an ancient symbol — a sun design from the Pueblo of Zia. Red and gold are the colors of Queen Isabella of Castile and were brought to the New World by the Spanish conquistadores.



Amphibian

In 2003, the state legislature adopted the New Mexico spadefoot toad, or *Spea multiplicata*, as the official state amphibian. The toad is named for the sharp-edged scrapers on the underside of its hind feet used to burrow deep underground to avoid dehydration. The spadefoot is nocturnal and rarely seen above ground when the weather is dry. It can eat as much as one-half of its body weight in one night's feeding and can store enough fat to survive for a year or more underground.



Animal

The black bear was selected by the state legislature as the official state animal in 1963. It is common in wooded areas throughout the state and is a protected game animal that may be hunted only with a license in the proper season. The bear's head is the insignia of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.



In 1944, the U.S. Forest Service and the Advertising Council created the poster featuring a fictional Smokey Bear as a symbol for fire prevention. In 1950, a black bear cub was found in a tree after a forest fire in the Lincoln National Forest near Capitan. The cub's caretakers called him Smokey Bear after the poster, and he became the living symbol for forest and wildfire prevention.

Bird

The chaparral bird, commonly called the roadrunner, is a species of ground cuckoo, a combination of chicken and magpie. It is approximately two feet long and has a tail that accounts for one-half of its length. The roadrunner has a long bill and a crested head, and its pheasant-like brown plumage attains a rich, greenish sheen in the



sunlight. This camouflage is ideal among the mesquite and cactus it uses for nesting. The bird can fly in a soaring sweep at low altitude, although it seldom does. It prefers to skim along the ground on long and powerful legs at speeds up to 20 miles per hour.

The chaparral bird earned its nickname from travelers along the Santa Fe Trail who noticed the bird as it raced along in wagon ruts made by prairie schooners. The New Mexico Legislature adopted the chaparral bird as the official state bird in March 1949.

Butterfly



The Sandia hairstreak (*Callophrys macfarlandi*) was named the official state butterfly in 2003. The butterfly was discovered in Albuquerque in 1959 at La Cueva Canyon and can easily be found, from New Mexico's wide open spaces to its cities, among native beargrass. The butterfly is gold and green in color, similar to the butterfly shown, while its caterpillar is pink, lavender and white.

Cookie

The biscochito (pronounced "biz-co-CHI-toe") was adopted as the official state cookie in 1989 and made New Mexico the first state to have an official cookie. The biscochito is a small anise-flavored cookie. It was first brought to New Mexico by the early Spanish settlers. The cookie is served during special celebrations, including wedding receptions and the Christmas season. It was chosen as the state cookie to help maintain traditional home-baked cookery.

Fish

The Rio Grande cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki virginalis*) is native to the cold mountain streams and lakes of northern New Mexico. It has a dark olive



color with sparsely scattered black spots, and its name derives from the red streaks under its throat. Although it is only six to eight inches long, anglers like the fish for its fighting spirit.

The cutthroat trout population in New Mexico has been declining in recent years, but the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, which manages sport fishing in the state, has a continuing rehabilitation program to maintain the cutthroat trout strain.

Flower

The yucca (pronounced "YUH-ka") was called "our Lord's candles" by early settlers who saw its beautiful flowers gracing the plains and deserts of New Mexico. It is found in abundant quantities throughout the state.



The yucca is a member of the lily family and is a symbol of sturdiness and beauty. In early summer, ivory flowers bloom at the tips of its long stalks. Broad, sharp leaves are at the base. The yucca can grow to the height of a small tree. Settlers found that ground yucca roots were an excellent substitute for soap, and it is gaining commercial favor throughout the country.

The state legislature adopted the yucca as the official state flower in 1927 after a survey of schoolchildren illustrated it as their choice.

Fossil

When it was decided that New Mexico should join a handful of states that have designated an official fossil to honor continuing research into the origins of fossils, historians selected the *Coelophysis* (pronounced see-LAH-fi-sis) dinosaur. It is the state's only Triassic dinosaur. In 1947, an expedition of paleontologists led by Dr. Edwin Colbert



discovered a remarkable example of the Coelophysis in the Triassic Chinle formation near Ghost Ranch north of Santa Fe.

Coelophysis reached no more than six feet in length and was so lightly built (with hollow bones) that it weighed only about 50 pounds. Judging from its skeleton, the small dinosaur could run at high speeds, and unlike many dinosaurs, it was probably a carnivore. It also may have been warm blooded. Despite some last-minute lobbying for the more numerous Brontosaurus, the Coelophysis was adopted as the New Mexico state fossil by the state legislature in 1981.

Gem

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his comrades, during their journey from eastern Texas to the Pacific coast in 1535, were the first to note the use of turquoise among Native



Americans. Hundreds of years before the Spanish explorers arrived, Native Americans were mining and fashioning ornaments out of this gemstone. The Navajo and Pueblo Indians of the Southwest call turquoise *chalchihuiti*, as did the ancient peoples of Mexico and

Central America, who used the same word to describe green turquoise, or jade. Turquoise set in silver is a huge industry in New Mexico.

Chemically, turquoise is a phosphate of aluminum carrying small quantities of copper and iron. Turquoise is the only phosphate that is considered a precious stone and is the most valuable nontransparent mineral in the jewelry trade.

The state legislature adopted turquoise as the state gem in 1967.



Grass

The blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) is a low-growing, six-to-12-inch-tall warm-season perennial sod or bunch grass. Its seed stalks, with two comblike purplish spikes on each side, occasionally grow as high as four feet.



The blue grama is found in all areas of New Mexico, but especially on sand, loam, shallow sites, bottomlands and mountain grasslands between 3,000 and 8,000 feet. It was adopted as the official state grass in 1973 by the state legislature.

Historic Railroad



Constructed in 1880, the Cumbres and Toltec railroad ran on small-gauge tracks and served the silver mining district of the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Due to the combination of the repeal of the Sherman Act in 1893, which had devastating effects on the silver mining industry, and the Interstate Commerce Commission's decision to abandon small-gauge tracks in 1969, the use of this steam locomotive ceased. Most of the track was dismantled; however, due to the efforts of railway preservationists, the most scenic portion of the track remained intact. Colorado and New Mexico purchased the track in 1970, and the railroad began tours the following year. The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad was adopted as the official historic railroad in 2005.

Insect

The selection of the state insect was prompted by an elementary school class that selected three likely candidates for an official New Mexico



insect. Ballots were mailed to every school in a statewide election, and the tarantula hawk wasp was the clear favorite. It was adopted as the state insect by the legislature in 1989.

The tarantula hawk wasp is part of a family that contains many species of common wasps that build nests in the ground and provision them with spiders. The tarantula is paralyzed after being stung by the female wasp, and it is then dragged to a prepared burrow where it is implanted with a wasp egg and serves as food for the developing larva. The adult is metallic blue with reddish antennae and fiery red wings, except the outer margin and base, which are dusky. The species selected by the state, *Pepsis formosa*, is found in New Mexico and other southwestern states.

Necklace

In 2011, the state legislature adopted the squash blossom necklace as the official state necklace of New Mexico. The bead design that is commonly termed the squash blossom is believed to actually be a pomegranate blossom and a symbol of Granada, Spain. The necklace design was first produced by the Navajo just after the 1880s and began being produced by the Zuni and Hopi after being taught how to silversmith.



Nickname

New Mexico's official nickname is "The Land of Enchantment". The phrase has a long history in New Mexico. It began appearing in print around the turn of the twentieth century. *New Mexico Magazine* began using it in 1935, and it appeared on state license plates in 1941. A ballad titled "The Land of Enchantment", by songwriter and Taos resident Michael Martin Murphey, was named New Mexico's "official state ballad" in 1989. The legislature finally adopted "Land of Enchantment" as the state nickname in 1999.



Question and Answer

Chile was adopted as one of the state vegetables in 1965. Its significance is further evidenced by the adoption of an official state question.

Chiles are served green, or red after they have ripened, and those who appreciate New Mexico cuisine have definite opinions as to which color they prefer. The issue is so important that diners are always asked for their preference when they order a meal: "red or green?". This very question was adopted as New Mexico's official state question in 1999. The answer to this question can be a point of contention for those who have strong opinions about which is better. All New Mexicans know that "red and green or Christmas!" is the correct answer. This became the official state answer in 2007.

Reptile

The whiptail lizard (*Cnemidophorus neomexicanus*) was adopted as the official state reptile by the legislature in 2003. It



is found from the northern Rio Grande valley south to northern Chihuahua, Mexico. The diurnal whiptail is in constant motion as it forages for insects among vegetation. The lizard is six to nine inches long, and its long tail is three times its combined head and body

length. Its brown coloring is marked with pale yellow stripes and light spots between the stripes. The species is exclusively female — reproduction occurs through parthenogenesis, a process in which an unfertilized egg develops into a new lizard.

Tie

The bolo tie is a necktie commonly associated with western attire. It consists of a braided cord made of either leather or metal and an ornamental clasp. In 1987, a non-binding mandate designated the bolo tie as the official neckwear of the state.



During a legislative session, male legislators are required to wear a tie and jacket while in their chambers. Upon adoption as the state tie in 2007, male legislators are now able to wear a bolo tie with their jackets.

Tree

The piñon (*Pinus edulis*) is the official state tree. This sturdy, slow-growing little evergreen flourishes over a vast area of New Mexico. The state adopted the piñon as the state tree in 1949.



When the Spanish settlers arrived in New Mexico in the early sixteenth century, they found Native Americans harvesting the tiny, tasty nuts of the piñon. Every few years, the tree produces a bumper crop of nuts, and New Mexicans scurry to go piñon picking before the nut-loving birds eat them. When cold weather sets in, the distinctive incense of burning piñon logs perfumes the air of villages and towns throughout the state.

Vegetables

New Mexico's state vegetables represent the culinary contributions of the early Spanish settlers, who brought chile (*Capsicum annuum* L.) from Mexico, and of its indigenous Pueblo peoples, for whom frijoles (pinto beans of the *Phaseolus vulgaris* variety) were a dietary staple. Chile is a pungent pepper that is harvested in early fall, then roasted, peeled and served. When chile ripens, it turns bright red, and red chile is often strung in ristras and hung out to dry. New Mexico State University has developed a variety of new strains of chile, and there are always conflicting claims as to who harvests the mildest or hottest. Chile and frijoles combine in a distinctive cuisine that can only be considered "native New Mexican".





The combination of vitamin-rich chile and protein-rich frijoles offers natives and visitors alike a memorable dining experience. In 1965, the legislative debate over adoption of the vegetables centered on the argument that the two vegetables were inseparable, so both chile and frijoles were adopted as the official state vegetables.



Can You Answer These Questions?

1. When was New Mexico's State Capitol built?
2. What are the two houses of the legislature called?
3. How many legislators serve in the senate? In the house?
4. What are the salaries of legislators?
5. How often does the legislature meet, and for how long?
6. Who are the leaders of the house and senate?
7. What are the functions of committees?
8. What are interim committees?
9. When was New Mexico granted statehood?
10. What are the various types of legislation?
11. What does the governor do when he or she disapproves of a bill?
12. What does the New Mexico state flag represent?
13. Where was the New Mexico state fossil found?



New Mexico Legislative Council Service
411 State Capitol
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
(505) 986-4600
www.nmlegis.gov
202.190045

