

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

House Memorial 65 (HM-65) Requests that the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety, convene a task force to conduct research on health and firearm safety policy and to make recommendations to reduce firearm violence in New Mexico.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

If the task force's recommendations result in statutory changes, agencies could face new costs, including:

- **DOH:**
 - Expanded public-health surveillance systems for firearm-injury data.
 - Increased workload for epidemiology, behavioral-health, and injury-prevention units.
 - Development of new licensing or regulatory frameworks.
- **DPS:**
 - Enhanced background-check processes or expanded prohibited-possessor categories.
 - IT modifications to criminal-history, National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and firearm-incident reporting systems.
 - Additional FTEs for compliance, data analytics, and reporting.
- **AOC / Courts:**
 - Increased caseload or administrative processing if firearm-eligibility laws change.

Because the memorial does not include funding, any new mandates created by future legislation could result in unfunded obligations for multiple agencies.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The memorial identifies firearm violence as a public-health crisis and directs a broad, cross-sector review of firearm-safety policy. Key issues include:

1. **Data Gaps and System Fragmentation.** Firearm-injury, toxicology, criminal-history, and licensing data are housed across multiple agencies with limited interoperability. The task force may identify substantial modernization needs.
2. **High Rates of Firearm Mortality in New Mexico.** New Mexico's firearm-death rate—particularly suicide among youth—exceeds national averages. DOH may face expectations to expand prevention programs and surveillance systems.
3. **Intersection of Alcohol Misuse and Firearm Violence.** The memorial highlights alcohol-related risk factors, which may require DOH and DPS to integrate cross-disciplinary data and policy analysis.
4. **Complexity of Proposed Policy Areas.** Topics such as licensing, prohibited-possessor categories, and retail-licensing requirements involve legal, constitutional, and jurisdictional considerations, including tribal sovereignty.
5. **Public Expectations for Action.** The memorial's extensive findings may create expectations for rapid policy change, which could exceed current agency capacity.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The memorial could affect agency performance in several ways:
Potential Improvements

- More comprehensive and accurate firearm-injury and violence-prevention data.
- Stronger interagency coordination between health, education, law enforcement, and tribal partners.
- Data-driven recommendations that support long-term prevention strategies.

Potential Challenges

- Increased reporting and analytical demands without additional resources.
- Need for new performance metrics related to firearm-injury surveillance, suicide prevention, and enforcement outcomes.
- Strain on legacy data systems if new reporting requirements are adopted.

DPS will be required to co-convene and actively participate in a multi-agency task force. This will cause DPS to dedicate resources to staffing, data collection and analysis (see below).

A. Workload & Staffing

- Research support
- Data collection and analysis
- Legal review
- Meeting coordination
- Drafting recommendations
- This may require pulling personnel from:
 - Legal bureau
 - Records and identification
 - Crime statistics/UCR staff
 - Firearms background check personnel

B. Data & Reporting Capacity

- Firearm licensing laws
- Felon-in-possession alignment
- Prohibited persons (including DWI)
- Toxicology data
- Effects of semiautomatic weapons & magazines

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

DOH would serve as the lead convener, requiring:

- Coordination of a large, diverse task force.
- Development of agendas, research plans, and public-health analyses.
- Drafting of the final report and recommendations.

DPS and other agencies would need to:

- Provide subject-matter experts for meetings.
- Supply data, legal analysis, and operational insights.
- Participate in cross-agency policy evaluation.

These responsibilities will increase administrative workload and may require reallocation of staff time.

The memorial directs DOH (Department of Health) to convene the task force “in collaboration with DPS.” This will lead to governance and leadership question, representation requirements, and timeline constraints (see below).

A. Governance & Leadership Ambiguity

- Who chairs the task force?
- Who controls the agenda?
- Who drafts final recommendations?
- Who is responsible for report production?

Without defined leadership structure, interagency coordination could be inefficient.

B. Representation Requirements

The memorial specifies particular participants (including advocacy groups and specific police chiefs).

Issues:

- DPS does not control participation of outside stakeholders.
- Named advocacy organizations may create perceived imbalance.
- DPS may face concerns regarding neutrality if recommendations are controversial.

C. Timeline Constraints

The memorial requires reporting by September 15, 2026.

Depending on:

- When the task force convenes
- Number of meetings required
- Data availability

The timeline may be aggressive given the scope of requested policy review.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

The memorial may overlap with:

- Existing firearm-injury prevention initiatives within DOH.
- Ongoing DPS efforts to modernize crime-reporting systems.
- Prior task forces or working groups on firearm policy, suicide prevention, or school safety.

Potential conflicts could arise from:

- Divergent stakeholder perspectives (public-health advocates, gun-rights groups, law-enforcement agencies).
- Tribal jurisdictional considerations.

Alignment of state and federal firearm-eligibility laws.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

- State, tribal, and federal data systems lack full interoperability.
- Toxicology data for perpetrators is not uniformly collected or reported.
- Licensing and background-check systems may require updates to evaluate proposed policy changes.
- Standardized definitions for firearm-injury categories, prohibited-possessor criteria, and alcohol-related risk factors may need to be developed.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

No other substantive issues to DPS.

ALTERNATIVES

Not applicable as no impact to DPS.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

The state will continue operating without a coordinated, cross-sector task force dedicated to evaluating firearm-safety policy through a public-health lens. Existing data gaps, system fragmentation, and high firearm-injury rates will persist. Without the task force, the regulatory gap in state-level firearms dealer licensing — where New Mexico imposes no state licensing requirement beyond the federal FFL — would remain unexamined, and the intersection of alcohol accessibility and firearm violence identified in the memorial's WHEREAS clauses would lack a formal interagency study mechanism.

AMENDMENTS

None at this time.