

New Mexico Needs One-Mile Health Zones Around Schools

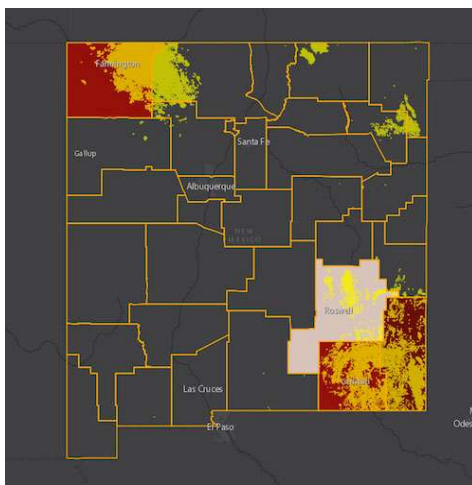
Lavran Johnson
New Mexico Attorney



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More oil and gas production = more pollution



Well sites in NM
Oil & Gas Threat Map

In New Mexico, over 70,000 wells produce over 2 million barrels of oil per day
Each well pollutes our air

- **2nd largest oil-producing state in world's largest oil-producing country**
 - Increased 10x since 2012; almost tripled under this administration
 - Permian Basin in SE corner one of biggest oil fields in the world
 - Air quality out of compliance with federal health standards
 - Land and water contamination from liquid fracking waste
- **3rd largest gas-producing state**
 - San Juan Basin in NW corner of state
 - Harms to Greater Chaco Landscape – of great cultural importance to Indigenous peoples and World Heritage Site
 - Unhealthy air quality

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Oil and gas pollution harms human health

- **Fracking wells release hundreds of air contaminants:**
 - Carcinogenic VOCs
 - Ozone-forming Nitrogen Oxides
 - Hazardous Particulates
- **Eddy county ozone levels consistently violate federal health standards** – San Juan and Lea county levels are right on the line.
- Ozone in these rural areas is overwhelmingly caused by oil and gas pollution.
- **Ozone causes a wide array of health harms**, including respiratory and neurodevelopmental harms in children.
- Methane and ozone rules are plagued by exemptions and enforcement issues, and struggle to keep up with increasing production.



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Children are vulnerable to O+G pollution



- **More than 70 studies show a link between nearby O+G wells and health harms** like childhood cancer, hospitalizations, asthma exacerbations, and mental health issues.
- **Children are more vulnerable** because their bodies are smaller and still developing.
- **Students report regular nosebleeds, headaches, and coughs** – impacts that affect their learning on top of their health.

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New Mexican students suffer from O+G pollution

- **34,929 students** in New Mexico go to school within 1 mile of a fracked well.
- **24,531 students go to school within ½ mile of a well** – sometimes, *dozens* of wells
- The problem is getting worse: **in 2026, 950 wells are within a mile of a school.** In 2024, that number was 857.

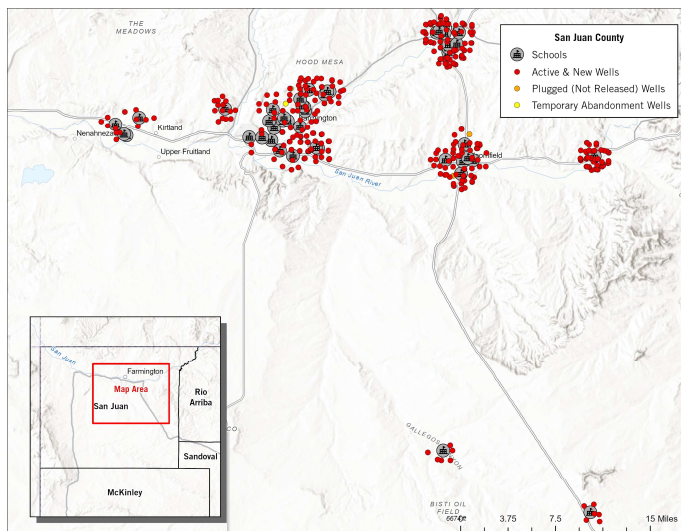


Billton Werito and his son, Amari, a student at Lybrook Elementary
PC: Nadav Soroker/Searchlight New Mexico

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Nearly all San Juan schools have a well nearby



Wells within 1 mile of a school in San Juan County (2024)

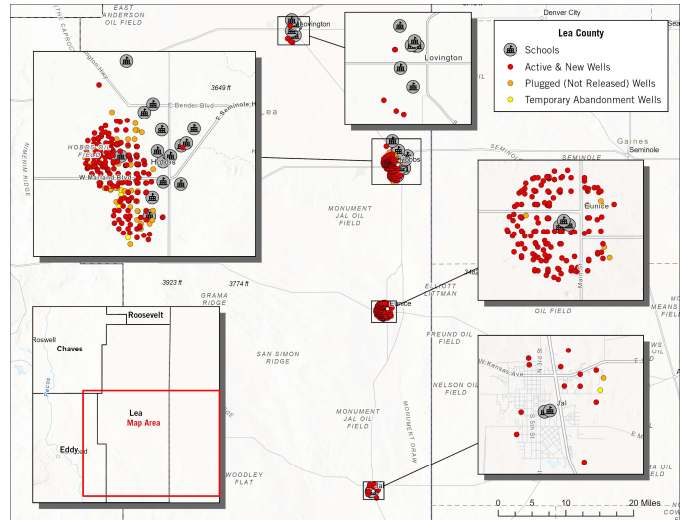
- **Over 94% of students in San Juan County – 18,469 students – attend school within one mile of an O+G well.**
- **17,670 students of those students go to school within ½ mile of a well**, at 50 different schools.
- **More than 1,000 of those students attend school within 1/10 of a mile of a well.**
- **Lybrook Elementary**, a small school in Rio Arriba County attended predominantly by indigenous students, has **23 wells within a mile**, 4 more than in 2024. This includes 6 wells within ½ mile.

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Permian schools are surrounded by wells

- Many schools in the Permian Basin are surrounded by **more than 50 wells within a mile**:
 - Jefferson Elementary (161 wells)
 - Eunice Schools (up to 138 wells)
 - Loving Schools (up to 57 wells)
 - Southern Heights Elementary (78 wells)
 - Heizer Middle School (71 wells)
- Several schools have **numerous wells within ½ mile**:
 - Jefferson Elementary (48)
 - Eunice Schools (up to 27)
 - Heizer Middle School (18)
 - Southern Heights Elementary (13)



Wells within 1 mile of a school in Lea County (2024)

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No meaningful local health protection

56,000 students in the Basins are unprotected from O+G pollution

Permian Basin:

- Hobbs: 300 feet
- Lovington: 300 feet
- Jal: 1000 feet
- Artesia: no setback
- Carlsbad: no setback
- Loving: no setback
- Eunice: no setback

San Juan Basin:

- Farmington: 300 feet
- Aztec: 400 feet
- Bloomfield: no setback
- Kirtland: no setback
- San Juan County: no setback
- Sandoval County: no setback

- Lea County: no setback
- Chavez County: no setback
- Eddy County: 300 feet; but 0 in city limits



Ocotillo Elementary in Carlsbad, NM

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Children's Health Zones would protect students

- **No new O+G wells within a mile**
 - Scientific studies support this buffer for sensitive populations like children
 - Variances and administrative processes preserve property rights
- **Enhanced oversight for existing wells within one mile:**
 - Required leak response plans and detailed annual reporting for each site
 - Increased penalties for non-compliance, up to \$3 million
 - Sites that leak for more than 48 hours must cease operations until the leak is fixed
 - Water quality sampling and chemical analysis of liquid O+G waste



PC: Steven Georges/Behind the Badge OC

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Children's Health Zones would not impact state finances



- **Children's Health Zones do not impact existing production**
 - The early stages of fracking are among the most polluting
- 2025 LFC analysis estimates **almost no reduction of new production** – 0.15% of new production
 - A one-mile health zone still allows oilfield access through laterals
- 2025 LESC analysis confirms that **Children's Health Zones “would contribute to positive health outcomes for New Mexico students.”**
- Existing property rights are protected through an administrative review process that allows variances.
- NMED and OCD would each administer within their existing expertise.

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Needed Controls for O+G Pollution

- **Children's Health Protection Zones**

1 mile around schools to protect children from the numerous health harms of new fracking wells.

- **Protect Our Precious Freshwater**

No freshwater for fracking and increased disclosure and liability for liquid fracking waste.

- **Protecting Health, Environment, and Heritage**

The Oil Conservation Division must consider impacts to our health, environment, and cultural resources.

- **Well Abandonment Liability Reform**

Oil and gas companies cannot escape responsibility for their messes by selling off old wells.

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