**Interfaith Power & Light (NM, El Paso) Legislative Priorities 2025**

*This document is by no means exhaustive of worthy climate and environmental legislation, but focuses on what NM IPL is prioritizing because of concentrated concern and benefits to greenhouse gas reduction and enforcement, economic transition support, community resilience and public health, and responsible water security and management in light of the rapidly increasing threat climate change poses to our sacred waters and desert communities. As they become published, hyperlinks will be included to take you to more detailed information and handouts from leading organizations.*

Higher priority:

We have chosen to uplift these bills as priorities because of the scope of their potential impact on climate, public health, and water security as well as the weight of their current political feasibility and coalitional support.

**Senator Mimi Stewart’s climate bill trifecta**

1. Clear Horizons (bill #)
2. Community Benefits Fund (bill #)
3. Innovation in State Agencies Act (bill #)

Clear Horizons

This is a new set of rules to make sure large polluters are held accountable to protect our environment and thereby creating pathways to actually meeting our statewide climate goals via greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Community Benefits Fund

This is a pot of money designated to helping communities transition economically to cleaner sources of energy and industry, including help fund projects that do things like strengthen community access to outdoor spaces of recreation.

Innovation in State Agencies Act

The goal is to better equip our state government and agencies to handle big projects and work with new technology.

It’s a bit of a balancing act to talk about three bills simultaneously, but the hope is to be able to do so as advocates because they are all really essential elements of making greenhouse gas reduction in our state both feasible and just for communities. In that spirit, here is some helpful comprehensive messaging with concrete examples:

With the **Clear Horizons Act, Community Benefit Fund,** and **New Mexico Innovation in Government Act**, communities across the state can start building the infrastructure and resilience needed to face a changing future. These legislative frameworks and resources will jumpstart projects that are ready to go and transform New Mexico’s approach to climate preparedness. Projects like:

● **Mora County Complex Community Center** to provide assets to residents recovering from the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fires.

● **Eddy County Peregrine Energy Storage Project** is set to transform roughly thirty acres of land into state-of-the-art battery storage to power communities with reliable renewable energy.

● **Curry County Ute Reservoir Pipeline Project** will help secure eastern New Mexico’s water future upon its completion, delivering water to communities such as Clovis, Cannon AFB, Portales, Texico, Elide, and portions of Curry and Roosevelt counties.

**Two related public health and climate adaptation bills**

1. State Climate Health Program, Ortez/Stefanics (bill #)

($1.1 million) at the Department of Health to build capacity and expertise, support development and implementation of communications (warning systems and culturally appropriate health education), increase community engagement, provide training and technical assistance, and improve interagency collaboration

1. Extreme Weather Resilience Fund, Ortez/Stefanics (HB104)

($12 million) to assist and enable local and Tribal communities to prepare for and respond to public health risks and threats related to climate change. At least 50% will be dedicated to small communities. Grants will be up to $1 million (no required match) and can be used to leverage federal or other funds.

You can learn more about the details of these bills with a recording of the legislative kick-off, [link HERE.](https://zoom.us/rec/play/N2wWmT9qVLc60RNQmM3i_NA9tq7NN2d4SxvORbbvWsoZV-Qs3aaWSnkuExMoYjNgICTGtgtuX05UQmSH.uYPnCN2NE1V6LIlA?canPlayFromShare=true&from=share_recording_detail&continueMode=true&componentName=rec-play&originRequestUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fzoom.us%2Frec%2Fshare%2FTx3a_CDlkFsuVx_EtfChzgOga4cIVqBw9ciq2SM9hOclV_eBciu10aba1dCftB31.wohH41vAgyyN7K2E) You can also find a one-page handout HERE.

**Water, water, water! 5 ways to advocate this year**

The water legislation landscape can be confusing because the bills are often quite technical and many are closely related. The first two bills we have identified are important especially because they would lead to regulatory action (read: accountability and enforceability). We NEED regulatory action to have protection for New Mexico Waterways and Waters since under the national EPA Water Quality Act since the Sackett decision, 96% of New Mexico Waters are not protected.

1. **Water Quality Act Amendments for Surface Water Permitting** - These amendments to the Water Quality Act will enable NMED to build a state surface water permitting program to protect waters that lost federal protections due to US Supreme Court decisions (regulatory process to follow if bill passes).
2. **NMPDES Primacy Bill** - This bill will enable NMED to take primacy from EPA of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System surface water discharge permits. The combination of this bill and the Water Quality Amendments will enable NMED to build a streamlined program to protect all of New Mexico's surface waters (regulatory process to follow if bill passes).

The following three bills deal with funding water security legislation that has *already* passed. Without adequate financial resources, good water governance cannot be put into practice. These three appropriations bills will be carried by Rep. Andrea Romero.

1. **Water Security Planning Act** - Advocate for funding: $30 million for the Water Security Planning Act which passed unanimously in 2023. This is to fund regional water planning that is robust and based on reliable data.
2. **State Agency Modernization** - Advocate for funding: $30 million for the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) and the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to modernize their equipment, software and processes so these two offices can do their jobs more effectively. The modernization of these two offices is critical to being able to fulfill the 2019 Water Data Act and the 2023 Water Security Planning Act outlined above.
3. **Active Water Resource Management (AWRM)** - Advocate for Funding: Urge state legislators to allocate $2 million to prepare for AWRM to the Middle and Lower Rio Grande and for approval of the Governor’s recurring budget for staff.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Medium priority: each of these bills has been proposed several times in past legislative sessions. Each of them is urgent and impactful and due to our small grassroots capacity we plan to wait and see how they are faring in the present political landscape before moving them to higher priority.

**School Setbacks,** Sarinana (bill #)

Anticipate being similar to 2024 legislation, which included: Proposed set back of 2,250 feet, (about half-mile from homes), schools, health care facilities and 350-600 feet from water features. Setbacks would only apply to newly permitted wells and would affect between 5% and 10% of future oil and gas production. New Mexico has a patchwork of drilling requirements. In Carlsbad, wells have to be 500 feet from residential buildings. In Hobbs, that setback is 300 feet. In Farmington, it’s 200 feet.Health cost estimates: between $624.4 million and $1.5 billion in health costs for New Mexico stemming from the oil and gas industry. Methane, nitrogen oxide and other chemicals linked to increased rates of asthma and lung diseases are byproducts of oil and gas production, according to the Legislative Finance Committee.

**Green Amendment,** Ferrary/Pope/Sedillo-Lopez (bill #)

After several years of efforts to pass this constitutional amendment, updated language for the 2025 Green Amendment bill is as follows:

SECTION 1. It is proposed to amend Article 2 of the constitution of New Mexico by adding a new section that reads:

A.The people of the state shall have a right to clean and healthy air, water, soil and environments; healthy native flora, fauna and ecosystems, and a safe climate; and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic and healthful qualities of the environment. The state shall protect these rights equitably for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, gender, socioeconomics, or geography.

B.The state, counties and municipalities shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of New Mexico and shall conserve, protect and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including present and future generations.

C. The provisions of this section are self-executing. Monetary damages shall not be awarded for a violation of this section. This section is enforceable against the state, counties and municipalities.

[The Green Amendment website houses further resources.](https://nmgreenamendment.org/overview/)

**Low Income Utility Bill Rates,** Ortez (bill #)

No public utility shall make or grant any unreasonable preference or advantage to any corporation or person regarding unreasonable utility rates.

**Low-Income Solar Rate Rider Exemption,** Stefanics (bill #)

This bill seeks to provide stability and financial predictability for low-income solar system owners by safeguarding the financial benefits of net metering. 1) Exempts low-income solar customers from rate riders for standby charges or ancillary services for new interconnected customers;2) ​​Adds a definition for "low-income customer" to the public utility act, defined as 80% AMI or lower; 3) Directs IOUs to administer verification of low-income customers through an annual questionnaire

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prioritize as possible:

For those who have a particular connection or passion for the focus of these bills on transportation and fuel issues, it would be wonderful to advocate for them, however, we don’t have the organizational bandwidth to prioritize them.

**Electric Battery Recycling,** Ortez (bill #)

Seeks to maximize EV batteries once vehicles reach their end of life, including reusing, repurposing and recycling EV batteries from EVs and Hybrid vehicles. Requires manufacturers of “propulsion batteries” to be responsible for battery management, including recycling and re-use. One pager coming soon from Western Resource Advocates (we hope!).

**The Methane Emissions Reduction Act** (bill #)

Aims to ensure the Clean Transportation Fuel Standard prioritizes truly clean, renewable transportation fuels that will lead New Mexico toward a fully decarbonized transportation sector and prevent polluting industries from misusing it. The Methane Emissions Reduction Act would protect the NM CTFS from the same counterproductive fate of California’s Low Carbon Fuel Standard by prohibiting the assignment of a negative carbon intensity rating to any fuel. The fuels that benefit the most from a negative carbon intensity rating are factory farm gas, along with other polluting fuels that purchase factory farm gas credits to offset their climate footprint. [**Factory farm gas is not a clean fuel.**](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2023/04/12/we-cant-let-this-gas-greenwash-polluting-factory-farms/) It produces the same air pollutants as other fossil fuels and contains impurities like ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and smog-forming nitrogen oxides. Additionally, transporting factory farm gas often requires several pieces of traditional fossil fuel infrastructure, including pipelines, which are notoriously leaky and are often necessary to transport the gas to and from refineries.