

Student Nurses Day at the New Mexico Round House

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Student Nurse's Day at the New Mexico Round House happened on November 4, 2025, with prelicensure associate degree nurses and faculty members from nursing programs around the state. Capitol Challenge, an educational and experiential learning opportunity in the legislative process, began about 30 years ago as a means for prelicensure nursing students and their accompanying faculty to attend workshops on how the legislative process works with all the steps that bills take to become law and the importance of the constituent/legislative relationship for the voice of New Mexicans to be heard and concerns considered. The Student Nurses Day at the Round House was changed from a spring event during the Regular Legislative Session to a fall event in which students may attend one of the interim committees in observation of the protocol, process, and identification of current legislative concerns. This change occurred several years ago in response to increased interest among the New Mexico Schools of Nursing in ensuring that students become familiar with

health policy and the role of nurses as health care advocates. The venue, held at the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute Pavilion, was at attendance capacity with students and faculty intermingling with acquaintances in excitement with what the day would bring.

The day began with a warm welcome from Jason Bloomer, MSN, RN, CCRN, CPHT, FANAI the New Mexico Nurse Association (NMNA) President followed by a presentation titled, Legislative Advocacy: Why it Matters: The Future is YOURS, by Gloria Doherty, PHD, APRN, and a presentation titled, Results of Nursing's Legislative Advocacy: Issues and Impacts, by Lisa Leiding, DNP, RN, the chair of the NMNA's Government Relations Committee. After these presentations, small groups of students and faculty walked to the NM Round House with each group led by a NMNA board member who guided their group around the Round House, visiting legislator's offices, viewing the beautiful pieces of art created by New Mexicans, and listening to the Pharmaceutical Update Hearing in front of the Legislative

Health and Human Services Committee. With the rising costs of health care and pharmaceutical costs, the New Mexico Health Care Authority needs to find a solution in covering the health care for an estimated 47% of New Mexicans who have their health care cost covered through Medicaid (KFF, 2025).

Over lunch, Linda Seigle, NMNA Lobbyist, shared crucial pieces of legislation which will be discussed in the 2026 Legislative Session. The afternoon activities included a presentation titled, Real Time: What's Happening Now, by Sheena Ferguson, DNP, RN, the Executive Director of the NM Board of Nursing and a simulation Mock Hearing in which students role played different stakeholder views in the discussion of the changes and expansions of the HB 178: NM Nursing Practice Act Changes (NM HB 178, 2025) which was signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on April 8, 2025.

It is important for student nurses to understand the conditions of the NM Nurse Practice Act under which they will be working once the students graduate, pass their RN-NCLEX exam, and begin their careers as licensed RNs. A Mock Hearing where students have a scripted role to play helps to provide alternative insights to the concept of health policy development through an experiential learning activity which assists the critical thinking needed for nursing students to understand what route is open to them as they care for patients and discover an unmet patient need which needs to be solved through the policy path (Jordan & Collins-Yoder, 2014; Lewis, 2011). The Mock Hearing Simulation deepens the students' understanding of what goes into a bill, how to reach out to all the

different stakeholders who may be interested in the passage of the bill, how to navigate opposition to one's bill, and to develop an appreciation of all the moving parts which brings a bill to fruition with the signature of the governor (Byrd et al., 2012; Christian, Sabo, & Anderson, 2025; Song & Jang, 2023).

The journey of the passage of HB 178: Nursing Practice Changes in 2025 took several years with practicing nurses at all levels and health care stakeholders identifying the challenges, within the older Nurse Practice Act signed into law in 1978. The signing of HB 178 into law, April 8, 2025, increased practice opportunities and strengthened the nursing profession's ability to safely care for New Mexican communities (Rodriguez, 2025). The new law defines the different nursing roles, particularly the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), proposed a reserve license for retired nurses allowing them to share their expertise on boards, and waives licensure fees for new nursing graduates which encourages new graduates to stay and work in New Mexico. Defining what it means to be an APRN in state statute diminishes the previous confusion of this role in caring for our communities. This statute

also clarified the meaning of sedation and under what circumstances a registered nurse can administer the sedating medication. The role of nurses is to provide safe and ethic care to New Mexican community members. The passage of HB 178 strengthens that position.

The New Mexico Nurses Association invites all prelicensure schools of nursing to attend Fall 2026 Student Day at the Capital. If interested, please contact Deborah Walker, NMNA Executive Director. Email: dwalker@nmna.org ■

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NMNA Members-Only Book Club – Spring 2026

Reading *Margin over Mission* by James Kelly, RN

Join your fellow NMNA members this April and June for a virtual book club celebrating the voices shaping our profession — starting with one of our own.

Margin over Mission takes an unflinching look at the forces pulling healthcare away from its core purpose. As nurses on the front lines, we have something vital to say about it.

Together we'll read, discuss, and generate ideas that can influence nursing policy and the future of our profession right here in New Mexico.

NMNA members only • Two sessions: April & June (online) • Details to come from NMNA to listed membership email

Watch your inbox — and bring your perspective.

