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## **NEW MEXICO JOINS 13 OTHER STATES IN AFFIRMING THE LEGALITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

### **NM Mining Watch Applauds NM Attorney General Raúl Torrez's Endorsement of the "Multi-state Guidance Affirming the Importance and Legality of Environmental Justice Initiatives" —A Major Victory for NM Communities!**

*ALBUQUERQUE, NM*—On Wednesday, January 21, 2026 New Mexico joined thirteen other states in uplifting the importance and legality of Environmental Justice in light of President Trump's Executive Orders that had introduced confusion over the legality of Environmental Justice activities.

New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez [endorsed](#) an 11-page document entitled "[Multi-State Guidance Affirming the Importance and Legality of Environmental Justice Initiatives](#)." New Mexico joined with California, Massachusetts, New York, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The Multi-State Guidance on EJ, initially issued in June 2025, addresses the critical nature and legality of state laws, policies and regulations in the face of Executive Orders which attacked Environmental Justice. Attorney General Torrez took the critical step of embracing New Mexico's history of improving and protecting the environment and public health of our communities by joining and endorsing the Multi-State Guidance on EJ.

Countering the federal pressure to ignore and abandon the lived experiences of impacted communities, the Multi-State Guidance on EJ boldly and specifically outlines that states can lawfully continue to uphold Environmental Justice and why it is critical to do so. **It is increasingly important for states to be the “backstop” to the federal actions to undo protections to the environment and public health.**

**The Attorney General made his decision after it was suggested to his office by a coalition of groups organized as New Mexico Mining Watch. The coalition pressured the Attorney General to act to protect New Mexico communities.** The January 21 announcement comes after New Mexico Mining Watch communicated with the New Mexico Attorney General's office and met with staff over six months, **urging New Mexico to sign on.**

The decision by the New Mexico Attorney General to add New Mexico to the 13 other states affirming the importance and legality of environmental justice initiatives is a **major victory for New Mexico communities.** It is an act of resistance against the overreach of the Trump Administration by reaffirming that **Executive Orders can't change or repeal laws passed by Congress or Constitutional principles.**

It also sends a strong message and an implicit promise that if the Feds come after New Mexico communities, advocacy groups or administrative agencies, that **the New Mexico Attorney General will step up with a vigorous defense.**

Embracing and uplifting Environmental Justice gives New Mexico communities and agencies the confidence to **continue with important work protecting air quality, protecting culturally important landscapes from mining, and protecting drinking water across the state.**

Some highlights from the 11-page-long “Multi-State Guidance on the Importance and Legality of Environmental Justice Initiatives”:

- Environmental Justice encompasses legal practices that seek to overcome environmental and public health disparities and improve local conditions including public engagement; grassroots organizing; technical assistance; water, soil and air monitoring; legal and legislative advocacy; remediation and enforcement of applicable laws;
- Environmental Justice helps to avoid and prevent unlawful discrimination and remediate its impacts;
- The President cannot prohibit activities that advance Environmental Justice;
- Stakeholders in the public and private sectors should feel assured that they can lawfully continue actions to advance environmental justice, and that these actions remain critical for public health and public welfare.

NM Mining Watch is a statewide coalition of organizations watchdogging mineral exploration and mining permitting, reclamation, and cleanup. Below are reactions from the five core groups of NM Mining Watch:

## Quotes

“As uranium mining projects are being fast-tracked across New Mexico, the Attorney General’s decision to join the Multistate Guidance is a critical step to protect community health, water, and environmental justice. New Mexico knows the lasting harm of uranium contamination, and our tribal communities cannot be pushed aside while safeguards are weakened. This action helps ensure accountability, transparency, and a real voice for those most affected—now and for future generations.”

—Wendy Atcitty, *Environmental Scientist*  
*Southwest Research and Information Center*

“New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez’s agreement to join the Multistate Guidance of the endorsement on the legality of Environmental Justice demonstrates to all of us that New Mexico prioritizes serving its environmental justice communities and will not back down from their commitments to those communities regardless of federal changes.”

—Ava Curtis, *Environmental Justice Coordinator*,  
*Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE)*

"A core principle of environmental justice is that no community should be the sacrifice zone for someone else's profit. As frontline communities around New Mexico face increasing threats from mineral exploration and mining operations, we applaud Attorney General Raul Torrez's decision to join the Multi-state Guidance on Environmental Justice to ensure that communities have a seat at the table in decisions that affect their land, air, water and health."

—Allyson Siwik, *Executive Director*,  
*Gila Resources Information Project*

"It is no coincidence that New Mexico is the state where the Jemez Principles for Environmental Justice were established in the late 1990s. Here, frontline communities—those also affected by colonialism—have always organized to protect the sanctity of water, and taught that Water is Life. By joining in the Multistate Guidance, New Mexico is continuing to take responsibility for leading the rest of the nation in showing that democracy, equality, and organizing are the preconditions for environmental protection."

—Sarah Knopp, *Policy Specialist*,  
*Amigos Bravos*

“New Mexico is experiencing increasing pressure from out-of-state mining companies for mining exploration and extraction across the state, in the Grants Mining District, the Pecos Wilderness, across the Southwest region and beyond. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center is heartened that the New Mexico Attorney General is now continuing our history of Environmental Justice leadership by embracing and supporting the importance of Environmental Justice. In the face of Executive Orders targeting Environmental Justice as “illegal discrimination,” the Multistate Guidance is a critical policy statement that provides necessary direction for New Mexico state agencies to uplift and protect our impacted communities in the development and application of state laws, regulations and policies.”

—Ann McCartney, *Staff Attorney*

***About New Mexico Mining Watch:***

New Mexico Mining Watch is a state-wide coalition of groups and individuals organized to watchdog mining permitting, exploration, operations, reclamation and remediation in New Mexico and to actively address mining policy and regulation reform based on shared values and vision. The Steering Committee consists of five community-centered core groups: Amigos Bravos, Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC), Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP), Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC).

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