

**DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF NEW MEXICO  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CAUCUS**

**ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES AND  
COMMUNICATIONS AND MEETING STANDARDS**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Environmental Justice Caucus of the Democratic Party of New Mexico (“EJ Caucus”) adopts these Organizing Principles and Communications and Meeting Standards to assist the EJ Caucus in fulfilling its mission:

*The mission of the Environmental Justice Caucus of the DPNM is to elevate the voices of all people regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, class, immigration status, disability, and sexuality so that environmental laws, regulations and policies respect all communities. The caucus aims to mitigate the disproportionate harm of climate change and pollution on disenfranchised communities through reducing emissions, securing clean air and water, protecting natural lands and wildlife, and opposing colonization. Actions undertaken by the caucus will include educating the public, initiating policies, promoting legislation, and supporting candidates in New Mexico that promote green values and the principles of environmental justice.*

**II. ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES**

As we, the members of the EJ Caucus, strive to fulfill our lofty, yet urgent mission we must at all times demonstrate the values of genuine democracy, equity, and respect for our fellow beings. These are the values of all who fight for environmental, economic, and social justice. The Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, a foundational document of the environmental justice movement, reflects such values. We therefore adopt the Jemez Principles as follows:<sup>1</sup>

**A. Be Inclusive.** If we hope to achieve just societies that include all people in decision-making and assure that all people have an equitable share of the wealth and the work of this world, then we must work to build that kind of inclusiveness into our own movement to develop alternatives to neo-liberal policies and institutions.

This requires more than tokenism, it cannot be achieved without diversity at the planning table, in staffing, and in coordination. It may delay achievement of other important goals; it will require discussion, hard work, patience, and advance planning.

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<sup>1</sup> The Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice hosted a meeting on December 6-8, 1996 at which environmental justice activists adopted what is now known as the “Jemez Principles” to hammer out common understandings to guide discussions and decision-making among participants from different cultures, politics, and organizations. See [www.ejnet.org/eg/](http://www.ejnet.org/eg/) The EJ Caucus adopts a version of the Jemez Principles adapted to fit the Caucus’ organizational structure.

It may involve conflict, but through this conflict, we can learn better ways of working together.

**B. Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing.** To succeed, it is important to reach out to new constituencies and reach within all levels of leadership and membership in the organizations that are already involved in our networks. We must continually build and strengthen a base that provides the credibility, strategies, mobilizations, leadership development, and energy needed for the work.

**C. Let People Speak for Themselves.** We must be sure that relevant voices of people directly affected are heard. We must provide ways for spokespersons of affected constituencies to represent and be responsible to those constituencies. It is important for members and cooperating organizations to explain their roles and identify the people whom they represent to assure accountability within our structures.

**D. Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality.** As we work on the many environmental justice issues with others and other organizations, we must consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support of each other's work. We must work to incorporate the goals and values of these allies into our work to build strong relationships. Communications, strategies and resource sharing are critical to help us see our connections and build on these.

**E. Build Just Relations among Ourselves.** We must treat each other with justice and respect, both on an individual and an organizational level. Defining and developing "just relationships" will be a process that will not happen overnight. It must include clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution. We need many skills to succeed as a Caucus; we need to determine the ways for those with different skills to coordinate and be accountable to one another.

**F. Commitment to Self-Transformation.** As we change our society, we must change from operating on the mode of individualism to community-centeredness. We must "walk our talk." We must be the values that we say we are struggling for and we must be justice, be peace, and be community.

## **I. COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS<sup>2</sup>**

Our communications with each other, as members, and with others outside the EJ Caucus form the foundation of our work to achieve environmental justice. Therefore, we shall follow a strict etiquette during such communications. Namely, we shall not verbally assault, berate, bully, or mock any member of the EJ Caucus or others outside the Caucus whom we may address. We shall engage in respectful dialogue in which we wait our turn to speak. We shall abide by this standard whether the communications are in-person or by telephone, email,

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<sup>2</sup> In formulating the Caucus' Communications Standards and Meeting Standards, the EJ Caucus borrows principles and approaches from the 2021-2022 Meeting Organization Rules of the State Platform and Resolutions Committee of the Democratic Party of New Mexico.

or any other mode of communication. The following are ways that we can ensure we abide by this overarching standard of communication:

**A.** As our fellow EJ Caucus members are all registered Democrats in the State of New Mexico who embrace the Mission Statement of the Environmental Justice Caucus, we shall assume that their statements are based on their commitment to work toward our common goals. We shall give each other the benefit of this assumption.

**B.** We must be active listeners in our communications with other members of the EJ Caucus – especially when we disagree on an issue or issues. This in turn means:

1. We ask questions rather than jump to conclusions and/or make unfair, patently hurtful assumptions; and
2. We think about ways to deepen the analysis rather than drive the dialogue toward the one-dimensional and usually false issue of “who is right” and “who is wrong”; and
3. We are patient with each other and are therefore willing to defer the debate to another time to possibly involve others to bring in other analyses.

**C.** When we hear an EJ Caucus member being disrespectful to another member or other person outside the Caucus, we should call the question and support the person being berated or otherwise mistreated; but we should do so in a respectful manner that de-escalates the hostility.

**D.** Whenever possible we should let those who are personally affected by an environmental injustice speak for themselves; this may mean that we personally seek out such representatives from the community to participate in the work of the EJ Caucus.

## **II. MEETING STANDARDS**

Many communications take place during meetings. In addition to the more general communications standards in Section III, these standards will apply in EJ Caucus meetings:

**A.** We will uphold a **culture of respectful inclusion** by encouraging participation, based on the principle of “stepping up, and stepping back.” This means, if you are the person who feels very comfortable sharing, take note of how often you are sharing, and consider giving time for others to share. Be present and active, but make sure others also have the time to participate, too. If you tend to be a quiet participant, take a chance and “step up” with your thoughts and concerns. A good facilitator will make sure this is safe for everyone.

**B.** The Executive Committee of the EJ Caucus shall meet no later than a week before every general membership meeting to **formulate the proposed agenda**. Members may attend the Executive Committee meeting to, among other things, propose agenda items. The Executive Committee will send the agenda to the whole membership well before the general membership meeting (preferably immediately following the Executive

Committee meeting, but in no event less than three days before the general membership meeting).

**C.** At any general membership meeting, **we will follow the agenda** that the members will approve by motion and vote at the beginning of each such meeting. The Executive Committee will move any items that were not addressed at the meeting due to shortage of time to the next available general meeting. The person presiding over the meeting will not allow the meeting to go later than the designated time for adjournment unless the members attending the meeting agree by motion and vote to extend that time.

**D.** As it states in the DPNM Rules (Article I, Section 1), we will follow Robert's Rules of Order, unless suspended to allow for a period of open discussion. Procedural rules, such as Robert's Rules of Order, are necessary to ensure that the Caucus resolves issues democratically. Members of the Caucus, including the leadership, should not use such rules to stymy or impede democratic discussion or even appear to do so.

**E.** We will dedicate a portion of our general membership meetings to reports from members who have **volunteered for certain tasks**. During this segment, the Caucus may discuss new tasks during which members may volunteer to take on any work identified as needed to advance the Caucus and its mission. These discussions should promote both accountability and appreciation and support for the work of our fellow members.