

Rachael's Reflections

Rachael Frija, DNP, RN, NPD-BC NEA-BC



As we close 2024, I reflect on an incredible year of progress, advocacy, and growth within the New Mexico Nurses Association. From the beginning of the year at NM Nurses Capitol Challenge in January to our pivotal discussions at the ANA Membership Assembly in June, we have continued to stand as leaders and advocates for nurses across our state.

Nurses Capitol Challenge: Setting the Tone for 2024

We began the year with the **Nurses Capitol Challenge**, an event that brought together pre-licensure nursing students and experienced professionals to immerse themselves in the world of legislative advocacy. The challenge ignited a spark in our nursing community, setting the stage for our continued efforts to shape healthcare policy. Together, we explored the rich history of nursing advocacy, discussed critical policy shifts, and engaged directly with lawmakers at the New Mexico Capitol.

Hill Day and the ANA Membership Assembly: Advocacy in Action

In June, our voices were carried to the national stage as we participated in **ANA Hill Day** and the **Membership Assembly** in Washington, D.C. I was honored to join **Executive Director Deborah Walker** and

Delegate Eric Riebsomer as we visited the offices of New Mexico's Congressional Representative Delegations. We highlighted pressing healthcare issues, including restricting mandatory overtime, addressing the nurse faculty shortage, and advancing the **ICAN Act**. These discussions were pivotal in ensuring that the unique challenges faced by nurses in New Mexico, particularly in our rural and underserved areas, were heard and addressed.

The Membership Assembly reminded us all of the essential role we play in advocating not only for ourselves as healthcare professionals but for our patients. The Assembly's focus on mental health and licensure for nurses—encouraging a culture where seeking help is normalized—resonated deeply with me. The actions taken by the Assembly to support veterans, and their healthcare needs, also reflect our commitment to serving every segment of our population.

ANA Leadership and State Dialogues: A Unified Voice

In August, the American Nurses Association made a significant announcement with the appointment of **Angela Beddoe** as their new **CEO**. Angela has already taken major strides in advancing the organization with a bold vision for future membership growth and engagement. Her leadership marks an exciting new chapter for ANA, and we look forward to seeing how her initiatives will continue to shape the profession nationally.

This year, we also co-hosted multiple state dialogue forums in collaboration with the **Connecticut Nurses Association** and the **Colorado Nurses Association**. These forums allowed us to pull together our collective voices across the nation, strengthening the unity and impact of nursing leadership in addressing

critical issues faced by nurses nationwide. Our collaboration brought forward valuable insights that continue to shape both regional and national nursing policies.

Partnerships, Volunteers, and Advocacy: A Collective Effort

This year's successes would not have been possible without the continued partnership and collaboration with the **New Mexico Board of Nursing, New Mexico Nurse Practitioner Council, the New Mexico Native American Indian Nurses Association, and the New Mexico Organization of Nurse Leaders**. These organizations have been instrumental in driving forward initiatives that improve the working conditions and impact of nurses across the state. I extend my deepest gratitude to these partners for their unwavering support and shared commitment to excellence in nursing.

A special thank you to our amazing lobbyist, **Linda Siegle**, whose tireless efforts behind the scenes ensured that our voices were heard at the state legislature. Her dedication to advocating for the nursing profession has been an invaluable asset to the NMNA, and we are incredibly fortunate to have her expertise guiding our advocacy efforts.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation for **all of our members who volunteer their time** to support the work of NMNA. Your commitment and generosity of spirit make all the difference. A heartfelt thank you to **Suzanne Canfield**, who oversees the **accredited approver unit**. Suzanne selflessly volunteers as our designated Accredited Approver-Program Director, ensuring that continuing education hours are awarded for our events, advancing both the professional development and educational opportunities for nurses across New Mex-

ico. We are deeply grateful for her tireless dedication.

Lastly, I want to give a **special thank you to Deborah Walker**, our Executive Director, for keeping the association moving forward with her unwavering leadership and dedication. Her guidance has been instrumental in the growth and continued success of NMNA.

History of Nursing Project: Documenting Our Legacy

This year, NMNA was awarded a **grant from the New Mexico Board of Nursing** to participate in an effort documenting the rich history of nursing in our state. NMNA was established in 1921, and the NM Board of Nursing was established two years later. However, neither entity kept formal histories of legislative, regulatory, or professional landmarks. With the healthcare landscape rapidly evolving, access to formal, documented history has become imperative. This history provides valuable context for legislative and regulatory initiatives, and we fear the loss of photographs, documentation, records, and personal histories.

We aim to capture the unique history of nursing in New Mexico, including the contributions of **Hispanic, Native American, African American, and international communities**. Additionally, we are committed to documenting a complete legislative history that outlines the evolution of nursing practice in our state.

Through this project, **NMNA has established the "History of Nursing in NM: On Whose Shoulders We Stand" special interest group**, which will document influential individuals, research historical documents, and identify photos, articles, and original sources to preserve our legacy. We are collaborating with various organizations, including the **NM Board of Nursing, VA, Indian Health Services, Hispanic Cultural Center, and College libraries**, to gather and preserve this history. The special interest group will also provide research opportunities

for students in this important arena.

NMNA is grateful to **Dee Billops DNP, RN, Jan Martin DNP, RN, and Pat Montoya BSN, MPA, MHA**, who are working with us to capture this rich history of nursing's contributions to New Mexico.

Looking Forward to 2025: Building on Our Success

As we move into 2025, I am filled with optimism. The seeds we have planted this year, through our advocacy, education, and innovation, are ready to grow. The **Nurses Capitol Challenge**, set to return in February 2025, will build on the momentum of this past year. Once again, we will unite nurses and students to ensure our voices continue to shape the future of healthcare in our state.

One of the keys to achieving our future goals is to **increase our membership and engagement**. With a larger, more active community of nurses, we can continue to advocate effectively for the changes needed in healthcare, expand educational

opportunities, and ensure that nurses in New Mexico are leading the way in innovation and practice. Together, we can accomplish these great things and more. My **Call to Action** to you is to recruit a nursing friend or two to join us and be a part of this amazing community.

To my fellow nurses: you have shown, time and again, your resilience, passion, and commitment to the well-being of our communities. 2024 was a year of action, and it is only the beginning. Together, we will continue to advocate for policies that reflect the realities we face in healthcare, and together, we will embrace the opportunities of the future—whether in advocacy, innovation, or patient care.

Thank you for standing with me this year, and I look forward to the work we will accomplish in the year ahead.

Warm regards,
—*Rachael Frija, DNP, RN,*
NPD-BC, NEA-BC
President, New Mexico

NMNA'S CAPITOL CHALLENGE 2025: Advocating for Your Practice

WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 12 • 2025
7:30AM - 3:30PM

NEW MEXICO CAPITOL (Parking at 485 Galisteo St.)
& SANTA FE FARMER'S MARKET INSTITUTE PAVILION
(AT 1607 Paseo De Peralta)

Fee: \$90.00 for NMNA Members and Members of Other Professional NM Nursing Associations

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