



New Mexico **Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice Biennial (2018-2019) Report**

The NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is your local connection to a broad-based, national, interfaith movement that brings the moral force of religion to protect and advance reproductive health, rights and justice through education, prophetic witness, pastoral presence and advocacy.

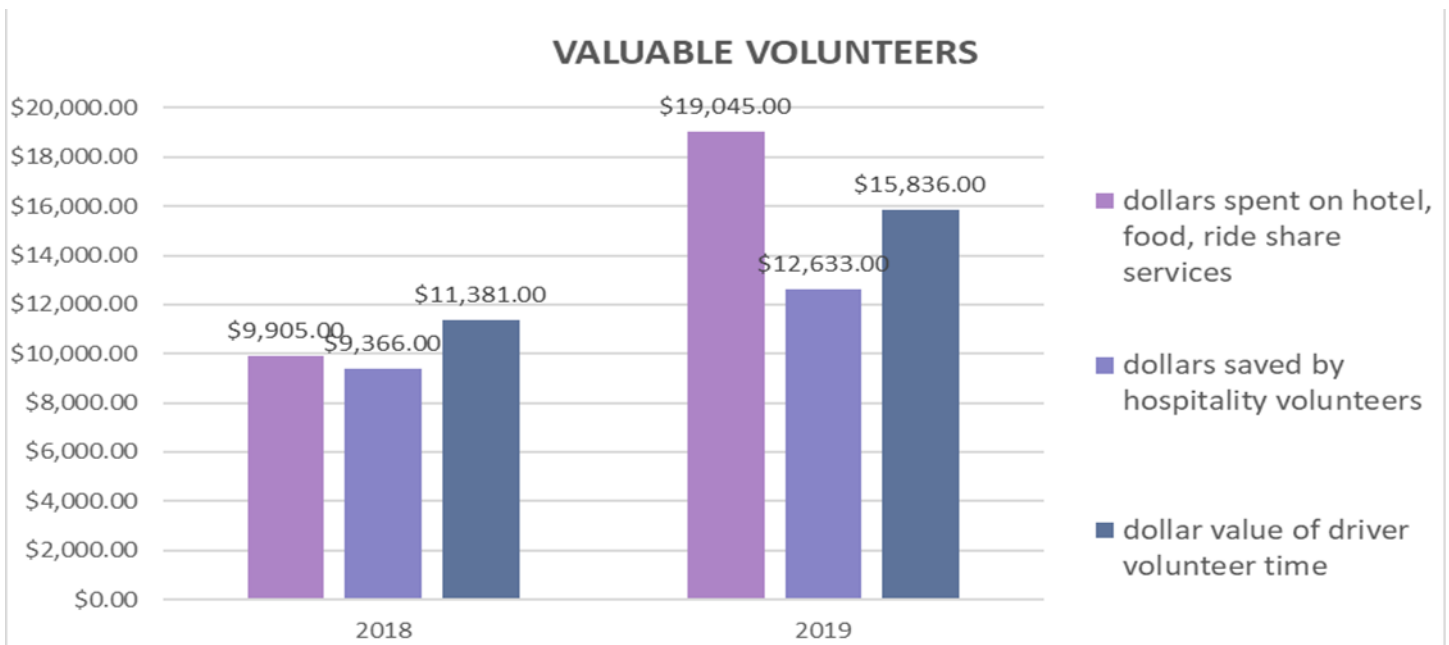
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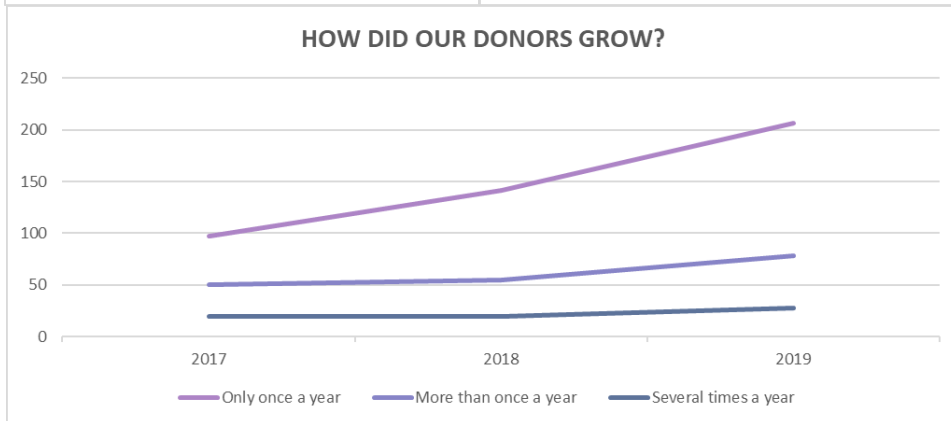
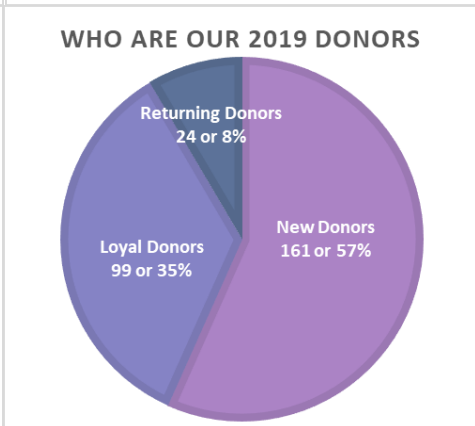
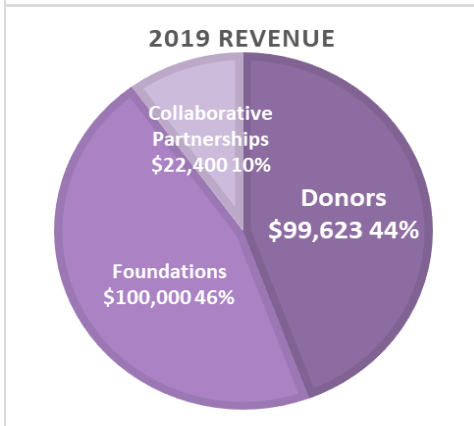
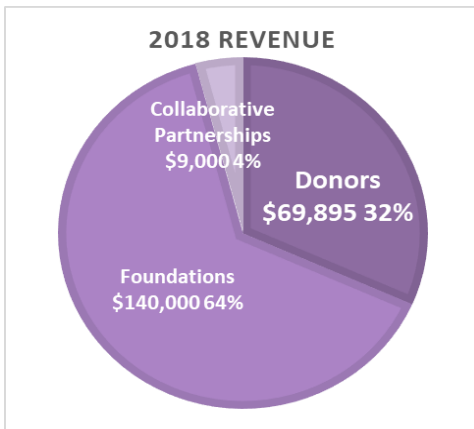
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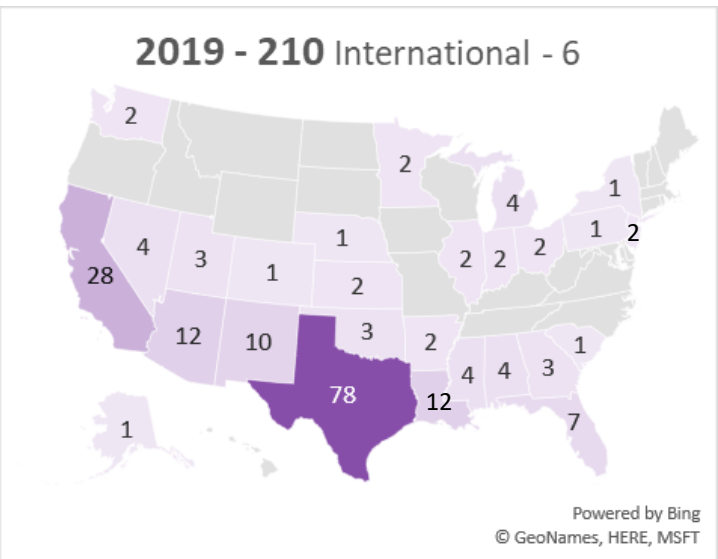
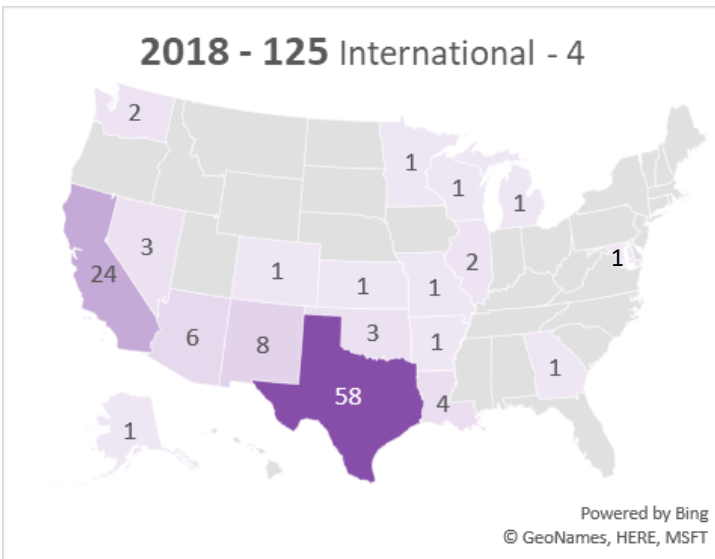
NM RCRC was founded in 1978 by volunteers from several progressive Christian and Jewish denominations as the New Mexico Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, to counter the Catholic Church’s pledge to overturn the then recent Roe v Wade decision. NM RCAR operated on a shoestring budget and extraordinary volunteer commitment. Now, more than 40 years later, the over 65 volunteers and over 100 Clergy for Choice members are the heart of the New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The staff has grown from a part-time director to two full-time staff, a half-time office assistant and a part-time legislative assistant. Our values require that we build a strong, visible and strategic network of people of faith and conscience committed to reproductive health, rights and justice in their congregations, communities and our statehouse.



NM RCRC is unique in the reproductive health, rights and justice movements, because we draw upon the moral power of diverse religious communities to challenge the systems of oppression that make it difficult and sometimes impossible to obtain reproductive health care including abortion care. Many people now have no other option but to travel from their home and families to New Mexico to seek care and often exhaust their family's financial resources. People of color, working families, youth, immigrants, and those who live in rural or reservation communities, look to the New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice as a place of safety for accessing reproductive health care.

It is through our donors, volunteers and our partnership with the National Network of Abortion Funds, that we have directly helped 335 women access their abortion in 2018-2019 by providing transportation, lodging and meals. Starting in 2001, when we assisted just eight women, we now assist more than 200 people a year.

Who comes to NM RCRC for Assistance Accessing Abortion Care?



Lessons Learned in the 2019 Campaign to Repeal New Mexico's Outdated Abortion Ban

The 1969 New Mexico's abortion law was one of the most progressive abortion reform bills for its time. While it banned access to abortion, it did make some limited exceptions. But after 50 years, it's one of the most dangerous laws that remains on our state books and could be used to criminalize women and medical providers if and when *Roe v. Wade* falls.

NM RCRC and our many partners in the Respect NM Women Coalition began to build momentum for repealing the 1969 law in the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions, and went to work immediately after the 2018 midterms mobilizing local activists to build support across the state for repeal of the ban. There were over 100 visits directly with lawmakers during the 2019 session by constituents, faith leaders and medical providers. **A sign-on letter, published in the Albuquerque Journal newspaper, drew over 90 signatures from interfaith leaders across the state.** Throughout the legislative session faith leaders came to speak with legislators. Faith leaders also testified for the repeal in committee.

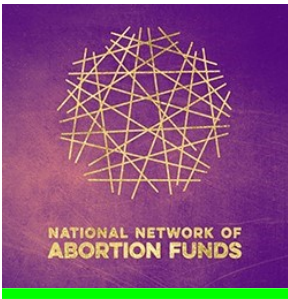
Anti-abortion activists blended intimidating messages, emotional rhetoric and a barrage of unprecedented, blatant lies about the repeal. They then joined with their allies in other states and unleashed a daily tide of threatening calls and emails to House members before the bill came to a vote and after, directed at the House members who voted for the bill as a way to intimidate Senators. In spite of this hostile and relentless campaign by anti-abortion activists, the repeal passed the House 40 – 29.

Then they turned on the Senate. Their campaign of intimidation and disinformation didn't prevent the bill from passing out of both its assigned Senate committees, but after a surprisingly short Senate debate, eight Democratic senators, two of whom had publicly assured their constituents they supported the bill, crossed party lines to join Republicans who all voted no.

What we learned in trying to get rid of these antiquated laws – whether we win the fight or not – makes our movement stronger. Namely:

- Start early. We knew the repeal wouldn't pass in 2017 or 2018, but we were building momentum.
- Build broad coalitions across movements. The Respect NM Women Coalition included partners in LGBTQ movement, interfaith partners, Native American and AAPI partners and youth advocacy partners.
- Participation by rural constituents adds strength. We prioritized funds to assist people in traveling to our state capitol.
- Younger advocates can bring valuable new ideas. We made space for their leadership.
- Build community. We provided practice for those who wanted to testify and prepared new activists on the committee procedures and what they might hear, especially from the opposition. We provided food and drink and de-briefed after. We provided space for childcare and places for elders to rest during long committee hearings.
- Never assume the opposition will work honorably. Secretaries and other support staff had to deal with most of the opposition. We let them know we appreciated them.
- ***For those who rely on religious authorities to tell them how to think and act about social issues, appealing to shame, fear and stigma remains powerful and persuasive.***

In New Mexico, we have continued our fight. The 2020 election cycle gives New Mexico an opportunity to "clean house" in the Senate just as we did in the House in 2016, and then re-introduce the repeal in the 2021 session. After 50 years of hard work by several generations of activists working to make New Mexico one of the best states for abortion access, **we're not going to stop now.**



BE BOLD. JOIN US.

United to restore and sustain abortion coverage.

ALLABOVEALL.ORG

Strategic Partnerships

We have a strong history of collaborative work, from our roots in the NM Coalition for Choice to the 2013 successful Respect ABQ Women campaign that grew into the 2019 Respect NM Women campaign to repeal NM’s criminal abortion ban. For us, working collaboratively with our community partners is a moral, ethical and theological imperative.



RESPECT
NEW MEXICO
WOMEN



New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

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