



**A TOOLKIT FOR DIVESTING PUBLIC FUNDS
FROM PRIVATE PRISONS**

PRISON DIVEST NEW MEXICO COALITION
2022

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THE PRISON DIVEST NM STORY

The Prison Divest NM story begins in 2017 when the Santa Fe Dreamers Project and the Santa Fe Faith Network for Immigrant Justice joined a national movement to end big bank support of for-profit private prison corporations. They successfully organized with the community to force Wells Fargo Bank to divest funds from private prisons. Soon after, a group of New Mexico public school educators were disturbed to discover that the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB) invested their pensions in the same private, for-profit prison corporations!

In 2019, Santa Fe Dreamers Project staff member Sylvia Johnson created two short films telling the stories of asylum seekers detained in private detention centers in New Mexico. The films communicated these earlier discoveries to a larger audience and inspired people concerned about social justice and immigrant rights to join the national movement against private, for-profit prisons. **Prison Divest NM** evolved into a statewide coalition consisting of **Santa Fe Dreamers Project, Santa Fe Faith Network for Immigrant Justice, Teachers Against Child Detention, fronteristxs collective, and other grassroots organizations** collaborating to prevent the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board from investing pensions in private prison companies.



After several years of consistent efforts by our dedicated members, Prison Divest NM successfully held the NMERB accountable for their investments, moving them to divest from private prisons in October 2020!

We are proud of our coalition's accomplishments and thankful for the many community members who mobilized with us. **We invite you to use this toolkit — in which we recount our strategies, obstacles, and tactics — in your efforts to divest from for-profit private prisons. We hope that our work can assist you in the fight!**

SETTING INTENTIONS & GOALS: Develop a Theory of Change

The organizing done by Prison Divest NM is grounded in a shared sense of moral outrage. Our theory of change – a formulation of how change is enacted – was implicit. If it is helpful for your group to formulate an explicit theory of change, we recommend you incorporate intention-setting and goal-making into that process.

Our Goal:

“To divest NMERB educational retirement funds from private prisons, especially from GEO Group and CoreCivic, two private, for-profit prison corporations that have lobbied the past 30+ years for longer sentences and ‘three strikes’ sentencing in order to increase mass incarceration; have promoted ‘zero tolerance’ school discipline policies to increase youth incarceration; have broken international human rights and federal laws through shoddy facility conditions and maltreatment of inmates and have refused any meaningful attempt at transparency or to engage with their shareholders...”



- ➔ For groups undertaking divestment organizing, intentional discourse around goals can strengthen relationships and clarify motives for group member participation.
- ➔ It is important that any groups organizing around divestment (or anything else) work to continuously educate themselves. One of the amazing things about the Prison Divest NM campaign is that for many people-coalition members included—it resulted in greater education and understanding of how pension funds are entangled in the prison industrial complex (PIC). Prison Divest NM studied, informed people about the PIC, and interested them in divestment from for-profit prisons. Although this campaign did not extend to the entire prison industrial complex (we were focused on private prison companies), for many, this initiated involvement in the broader work of abolition of the PIC.
- ➔ In your organizing, keep track of lessons learned from developing diverse constituencies. Resilient organizations change, grow, and adapt.

Some facts about the prison industrial complex in the US and NM:

The United States of America has the highest inmate population both per capita

**(655 PER 100,000)
(2.1 MILLION).¹**
and total

People of color are disproportionately represented in US prisons and jails:

BLACK AMERICANS are incarcerated in state prisons at nearly **5X** the rate of White Americans.

LATINX AMERICANS are incarcerated at **1.3X** the rate of White Americans.²



BLACK STUDENTS ARE 3X more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than

WHITE STUDENTS.

Despite making up only 16% of the US student body, Black students account for over 31% of all in-school arrests.³

1. "United States of America," World Prison Brief, <https://prisonstudies.org/country/united-states-america>

2. "The Color of Justice, Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons," The Sentencing Project, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/the-color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons-the-sentencing-project/>

3. "Civil Rights Data Collection, Data Snapshot: School Discipline," US Dep of Education Office for Civil Rights, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-discipline-snapshot.pdf

New Mexico incarcerates
its people at a rate

**18.7% HIGHER THAN THE
NATIONAL RATE.**⁴

New Mexico relies on private prisons more than any other state:
45% of capacity in NM prisons are managed by private prisons,
compared to the

**NATIONWIDE
PERCENTAGE OF 8.5%.**⁵

**THE BUSINESS
MODEL OF PRIVATE
PRISONS RELIES
ON INCARCERATING
PEOPLE TO MAKE A
PROFIT,**⁶

often causing their responsibility to inmate health and safety to be overshadowed by responsibility to shareholders. In order to maximize profit, the business model of private prisons incentivizes recidivism and harsher sentences, which are actively lobbied for by private prison companies. Policies such as lengthier mandatory minimums, Three Strikes Laws, Truth in Sentencing laws have all been lobbied for by the private prison industry.



**IN 2017 IN⁵
NEW MEXICO,**

73% of all people in immigration
detention were confined in privately-run
facilities.

4. "New Mexico Profile," Prison Policy Initiative, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/NM.html>

5. "Private Prisons in the United States," The Sentencing Project, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/private-prisons-in-the-united-states/>

6. "Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Contract Prisons," Office of the Inspector General, US DOJ, <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/e1606.pdf>

PRIVATE PRISONS

are not any more economically viable than their

PUBLIC COUNTERPARTS.⁷

Due to successful divestment campaigns led by activists, large banks, including Wells Fargo, JP Morgan Chase, and Bank of America, have stopped lending to private prisons.



In 2019, the

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (AFT)

outlined the economic risks of investing in private prisons to bodies like the NMERB.

**3 OUT OF THE 4 LARGEST
TEACHER PENSIONS IN
THE U.S. HAVE DIVESTED
FROM PRIVATE PRISONS.⁸**

7. Weston White, Anita Alves Pena, Stephan Weiler, "Going private: Are private prisons cost-saving options for states?" Growth and Change. 2020; 51: 1000-1016. <https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.123885>

8. "Private Prisons and Investment Risks," American Federation of Teachers, <https://www.aft.org/private-prisons-and-investment-risks>

OUR TACTICS

→ **In both our internal and external efforts, we work to center the voices of those who are directly impacted and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).** Particularly with work around the prison industrial complex, which impacts people of color disproportionately, it is vital to follow leadership and direction of directly-impacted folks. Through this campaign, we engaged in acts of political storytelling to change the narrative around pensions and where the money is invested. Investments are one expression of our values.

The **New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB)** is the public body responsible for managing the retirement (pension) funds for employees of public K-12 and higher education institutions in New Mexico. We targeted this board of 9 members because many of us are school educators or staff, so knowing our retirement funds were directly invested in private prisons was both outrageous and something we had a direct stake in. We were able to successfully mobilize other educators, students, and staff around the state for the same reasons.

Letters, Statements & Press Actions

→ **Keep the letters and statements coming!** In our case, op-eds by different coalition members were featured in both Santa Fe and Albuquerque newspapers. We kept track of reporters who were willing to publish pieces on our work and kept them in the loop. With enough coverage, we even got the attention of the editorial boards of local newspapers, which published supportive editorial pieces.

→ **For over a year, the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB) regularly received letters from a new group asking them to divest from private prisons.** Prison Divest NM reached out to local school district leaders, public school/university unions, faith organizations, and civic groups to inform them about the horrific effects of incarceration and the campaign to divest NM educational retirement funds from private prisons.

Art

➔ **Art was a hugely successful and fun tactic in our divestment campaign.**
Just a few of our art actions:

The frontieristxs created a **banner drop, an activist tactic of putting a large message of protest in a prominent public place**, at the Sanitary Tortilla Factory in downtown Albuquerque. Media outlets were informed and we conducted a press conference via Instagram Live to correct misinformation perpetuated by the NMERB director and board members.



Prison Divest NM took out a prominent billboard on Interstate-40 in Albuquerque leading up to an important NMERB Board of Trustees meeting.

We collaborated with Free Them All NM Coalition on weekly demonstrations (“Free Them All Fridays”), such as those at the Cibola County Correctional Center run by the private corporation CoreCivic and on the campus of University of New Mexico.

The frontieristxs created a large-scale projection and VJ (live video mixing) performance with VJ Britney A King at the site of the former county jail in downtown Albuquerque.



Petitions



We circulated an **online statewide petition** urging divestment that was signed by **1,200+ people** -- mainly educators and school/university employees.

Social Media



We launched a social media campaign to urge letter writing and NMERB meeting attendance. Our art actions were showcased on the *fronteristxs* Instagram account.

1

Deadline this Fri Oct 9 at 12 noon:

Email each trustee and **ED Jan Goodwin** telling them it's time to listen to their beneficiaries: **dump GEO Group stocks immediately** and never invest in any type of prison stocks again.

Put "Divestment" in the subject line; Below are email addresses and you can find more info at prisondivestnewmexico.org

2

Attend NMERB's OCT 16th meeting, 9am: stay tuned for the meeting link!

Even though they are trying their best to silence our voices by not allowing attendees to turn on cameras or enter names, **we must show up with numbers!**

Your voice counts!

Collaborations

➔ **Collaboration is a fundamental necessity for success.** Nothing can be done without engaged participants. There is power in numbers and diverse stakeholders.

We recommend joining forces and causes; if starting a new organization be sure not to operate in a silo. Lean on precedent, and look for existing resources. Identify how much of the work has already been done or is being done by others

The Prison Divest NM coalition collaborated with: Albuquerque Teachers Federation, American Federation of Teachers NM, Millions for Prisoners NM, UNM Sanctuary Campus Working Group, UNM Retirement Association, Albuquerque Interfaith, and Horizons Sustainable Financial Services,¹⁰ to name a few.

Further collaboration took place between Prison Divest NM, university professors, and students: we built a relationship with several classes run by the same professor (Dr. Jennifer Tucker from UNM Community and Regional Planning) over 5 subsequent semesters. Student groups participated in the Community Action Project (CAP) through projects that helped to educate the campus community, including a short film, a blog on “COVID in Prisons,” and the successful passing of The Associated Students of the University of New Mexico Government Joint Resolution 8F denouncing the direct and indirect investment of tuition dollars into private prison industry and urging the University to divest from private prison companies.

See “More on Collaborations” below for more on this subject.



Meetings

- ➔ **Regular attendance at New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB) meetings was vital to our success.** Several educators who were personally impacted by incarceration spoke about their experiences to the NMERB Trustees. When meetings went online due to COVID-19, hundreds of us attended a meeting, and the board lost control of the narrative (before shutting off our mics!).

Our attendance at meetings enabled the Identification and support of existing and potential allies. Additionally, it raised the awareness of potential allies and persuaded them to do the right thing and support divestment. As we wrote on a document illustrating how to talk to the board:

“Tell a short personal story – did you have a student, know a family or your own family member or friend, that got caught in this system – and how did it impact this person or you? What makes you so passionate about this?”

- ➔ **Reminding NMERB who their constituency is** and to whom they are accountable (pension holders, i.e. educators and staff in NM) was also an important aspect of our meeting attendance.
- ➔ **Showing up and being present at your own organization’s meetings is important too!** Create a Signal group, email group, WhatsApp group, Slack channel, or whatever platform your core group identifies as most useful to their organizing.



Financial & Legal Expertise

→ **Recruit various experts to the cause!** Bring on financial and legal experts as early as you can. In our case, we contacted a financial expert early on when financial and legal terms we did not know were flying at us. We received support and expert consultation on the financial markets and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) investments from Horizons Sustainable Financial Services. We studied divestment campaigns around the country, such as those in Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania. We connected with Worth Rises, an organization educating the public about the for-profit motives driving the prison industrial complex. We also had attorneys on our team who knew the ins and outs of working with the state government. Importantly, we submitted several letters from two pro bono lawyers working with the Santa Fe Dreamers Project, which provided critical legal analysis supporting the ability of the NMERB to divest and refuted the Executive Director's and the Board's arguments against divestment.

→ **The financial argument in the case of divestment is extremely powerful. The moral argument is unfortunately not likely to sway all parties;** if you can evidence poor financial grounds for an investment, you can build a solid case. This is doable since for-profit private prisons are an unstable investment. The movement to divest from private prisons has already negatively impacted the ability of private prisons to access loan capital, and bad press has hit their stock prices. The divestment strategy is working to make private prisons a bad investment! Educate your participants on the prison industrial complex, including an understanding of the nationwide proliferation of "for profit" private prisons

(historically impacting persons of color who are U.S. Citizens) and for-profit detention centers (impacting asylum seekers and immigrants). Books worth reading are *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, *Migrating to Prison*, *America's Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants* by Cesar Cuauhtemoc Garcia Hernandez, and *American Prison* by Shane Bauer.



Formulate Strategies for Confronting Power

➔ **Formulate strategies to confront the insular culture of the board, in our case, the NMERB.**

We connected with as many organizations as we could and reached out to stakeholders — for instance, some of our members connected with the UNM Retirement Association, which was a fruitful collaboration. It was a unique situation for our win because the NMERB manages investments for K-12 and higher education employees, whereas some states keep those pensions separate.

The people making investment decisions typically are not used to the public engaging in their processes, and in our case, were very resistant to it. Be persistent, know your rights, and keep consulting with your legal sources. Do not take anything the board says or writes as truth without first investigating it. Misinformation is a tactic that opponents will use to undermine your efforts.



Group Education

→ Educate participants on the prison industrial complex as well as the structure of financial investments.

Lean on the precedent that was established when activists successfully pressured 9 big banks into dumping private prison and detention center investments. Some of the banks included are Wells Fargo and Bank of America, who, in 2019, finally withdrew support and loans from GEO Group and CoreCivic due to activist pressure.

→ One of our successful counter-tactics was making and dispersing information and “Myth Busting” sheets that evolved as the arguments evolved; these enabled us to address specific misinformation from opponents within the NMERB.

For members meeting with board members or speaking to the press, we made a guiding document. This built our literacy representing the cause as a group.

→ The “Guide and Talking Points for Meetings with NMERB Trustees” included tips like:

“Always start with thanks – whether it’s for meeting with you or for voting against the divestment policy. Personalize your conversation as much as possible – it will put both of you at greater ease. However, please don’t use your short, valuable time to chat – just be friendly, clear, and firm. Explain that you’re sharing your point of view as a stakeholder in NMERB and briefly state what your position was in the public schools or secondary education system.”

Counter the ‘Slippery Slope’ Argument: One important thing to remember is that we aren’t discussing any other issue – oil, gas, etc. – we’re only focusing on this issue at the moment. The reality on the ground now is the need to prevent our pension from investing in stocks at high risk that are unethical and inappropriate for an educators’ fund. *[This does not mean you should not tie your campaign to other causes, like divestment from oil and gas; we did, in fact, deliberate on whether to do this; ultimately, as a coalition, we decided to focus on the single issue of private prisons as the best strategy for us at the moment. We remained open to future expansion of divestment from*

other industries. Developing this toolkit was another way that we decided to support future divestment campaigns.]

It is also great to attend related webinars, training, online events, film screenings, and discussions. Share what you have learned with the group to keep growing together.

Research

- ➔ **Reach out directly to those doing the investing (and, hopefully, divesting)–in this case, the NMERB. Look for allies within; research past votes; undertake a strategic sizing up of the people who might work against you.** Prison Divest NM spoke with the NMERB Executive Director twice, but when she was not interested in divesting and instead decided to spread misinformation, the group felt it would be more strategic to approach others.
- ➔ **Research precedents:** who else has asked for what you are asking for? Research the veracity of statements from the board and their lawyers.
- ➔ **Keep the communication lines open with allies and potential allies** with power around decision-making, such as board and staff.
- ➔ **Stay Organized:** find a platform for secure communication that works for the members of your group. If using a cloud service (like Google Drive or Dropbox) for sharing documents with the group, keep in mind that ownership/access should be shared; otherwise, those files could be lost; have a backup system in place to ensure no files disappear.



[Here's a folder with the myth busters, talking points, and other documents we published.](#)

Obstacles

Some obstacles we encountered were:

- ➔ **Entrenched support for the status quo**, such as use of the Standard & Poors (S&P) metrics; opposition to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) analysis of investments
- ➔ **“Legalese” (highly technical language) that contributes to the ability of the opposition to intimidate and mislead.**

Legal and financial expertise should accompany divestment efforts. We learned about financial and legal regulations in order to hold the NMERB accountable for its investments. **Our campaign’s success depended on our wading through misinformation to assert that private prison corporations are unstable investments.** In and of itself, even this correct assertion was not enough to force divestment. The insular culture and practices of the NMERB reflected members’ interests in protecting the group’s power and keeping the public out of their process. Our coalition members had the experience of being muted on Zoom during board meetings; had their time to speak in subsequent meetings rescinded; had difficulty contacting board members, and had to debunk false claims made by board members, staff, and the Executive Director.

- ➔ **Beware of diversion tactics:** after months of mounting pressure by the Prison Divest NM Coalition to divest, the NMERB crafted what it deceptively called a “divestment policy” that falsely declared that the NMERB needed the approval of the NM legislature to divest and falsely implied that the NM legislature had the authority to direct the NMERB’s investment policy decisions. Additionally, outside investment advisors made false claims on their behalf; pro bono legal counsel and coalition members researched and debunked the pseudo-divestment policy and its false claims.

Our experience with the NMERB taught us that any group organizing for divestment could reasonably expect the opposition/establishment’s lawyers to mislead their organization. Having legal expertise and/or strong research skills and resources is a must. Additionally, we realized that the group in power, in this case, the NMERB, was willing to ditch their own protocols and processes when things got heated.

RESILIENCE

Our group, just like most activities in 2020, moved online with COVID. We retained our commitment to the cause, remained flexible and resilient, and did not let the board forget about us. It is possible that the board's shift to online meetings was beneficial to us in that it enabled wider attendance by our group and the public - however, they were also more easily able to silence us with the mute button. With each meeting, the NMERB exercised greater control over the meetings until they were not allowing participants to name themselves via the software platform, not allowing cameras and mics to be turned on, and greatly limiting the time for public comment. Do your research! Public entities are often required by law to post the agenda and meeting notes within a certain time frame of the meeting.

Community Action Projects

The Prison Divest NM Coalition collaborated with graduate and undergraduate students in an allied faculty member's Community and Regional Planning courses at UNM. Over several semesters, small groups of students undertook "Community Action Projects," or CAPs of their choice.

WHAT WORKED:

- Integrating students into regular meetings resulted in feeling connected
- Student questions caused the group to think more deeply about our work. Their questions came with a fresh perspective, sometimes one unfamiliar with the internal dynamics of our organization. This caused us to have to articulate our intentions and goals.
- Mobilizing existing student expertise: eg, documentary and storyboarding skills

MISSES:

We sometimes didn't publicize student work enough! We are an all-volunteer coalition, and sometimes we didn't have capacity to follow up on some great student projects. Advice: identify a point-person for specific initiatives such as student collaborations.

Below are UNM student projects for your education and appreciation:

The ASU resolution drafted by Ian K May and passed by the University of New Mexico Student Senate: [Resolution 8F](#)

The [prison divest nm mini-doc](#) by Tina Ruiz, Jazmin Moreno, Alisha Anderson

The [Covid in Prisons blog](#): by Mary Ann Maestas, Karina Rodgers, Nicole Delorenzo

Opportunities for Improvement:

→ If utilizing student collaboration as part of a divestment technique, be mindful that students often jump in or depart at the midpoint. There are challenges getting students up to speed in a process that they haven't been part of.

We suggest asking, as an organization, whether there are ways to support student-activist integration; are there times when it is not a great fit to have them jump in? In our own work, we generally landed on the side of 'the more, the merrier!' especially because it was refreshing to have their questions and insights and to see what they did with the work. If working with students affiliated with a specific class, be aware that their level of knowledge and interest might be dictated by prior preparation and work with their instructor.

→ **How can the group collaborate with instructors to weave divestment into the curriculum?**

→ **Decide if this is an open-ended project of the student's choice or if you would like to assign them a task.** It is important to identify when students come in with a certain amount of facility with the subject matter because it makes a difference.

Group Dynamics



How can we build the coalition and nurture internal collaboration? How do we organize as human beings with complex lives? For many of us, this is the most challenging part of organizing.

From our core group to the outer circles of support, the Prison Divest NM coalition is and has been united by a shared set of values. Our work as an organization has been value-driven. Many of us came in as educators with a stance against migrant and youth detention, but this campaign became much bigger than that. A lot of teachers and participants learned a great deal about the carceral system along the way. Many people went down the road of abolition work. Our fight against companies making a profit over people's misery went very deep.

While this shared mission streamlined our actions in some ways, we were not immune to the normal pitfalls encountered by a diverse group of people working together. The phrase "calling in," as opposed to "calling out," has been floating around activist and social media circles for some time now, and it is integral to our core group practices while working together. The practice of calling in refers to a way of addressing harm by giving the person who caused harm a chance to hear the concerns and change their behavior, rather than simply calling them out and punishing them or isolating them. **We used community agreements that we developed and revisited often as guidelines for our meetings.**

➔ **When the group encountered issues — such as microaggressions and miscommunications — we convened meetings outside of our regular agenda to address harm, intentional or not, and we gave space for the feelings of group members.** In general, holding space was a regular practice of ours. If things get really tense, you might consider asking an outside mediator or facilitator with experience to guide difficult conversations. When the energy drain struck, a different group member would step up to take on the work. Our commitment to simultaneous and autonomous actions made us a persistent bunch. We were able to undertake many actions, guided by different group members, at a time. One person cannot do it all.

➔ **Here's a great resource for handling conflict in groups: [*In it Together: A Framework for Conflict Transformation in Movement-Building Groups*](#) by Interrupting Criminalization & Dragonfly Partners**



More on Collaborations

Collaboration is essential and difficult. You can't do it alone, especially when dealing with school districts and public bodies that can be conservative and territorial. Unions can also be important allies. Consider first reaching out to whatever groups have a stake in your project. In our case, this included: educators and staff, students, school boards, teacher's unions, faith groups, artists, advocates fighting the prison industrial complex, financial experts, legal experts, and the general public.

Collaborators & Participants

Santa Fe Dreamers Project

Santa Fe Faith Network for Immigrant Justice

Teachers Against Child Detention

fronteristxs collective

Free Them All NM

Public school educators

Albuquerque Teachers Federation

American Federation of Teachers NM

UNM Law School Faculty

UNM Community & Regional Planning Faculty

Millions for Prisoners NM

UNM Sanctuary Campus Working Group

Albuquerque Interfaith

Horizons Sustainable Financial Services

UNM Retiree Association

Medicine Drum Circle



**NEW MEXICO,
WE DID IT !**

Thank you to all of the community members who joined our campaign by signing letters, showing up to meetings, and sharing this issue on social media and in personal circles!

A Timeline of the Divestment Campaign led by Prison Divest NM

This timeline does not contain all events, but we hope that, in combination with the rest of this toolkit, it offers a glimpse of how we approached this effort and some helpful tips for your campaign!

June 2019

Members of Prison Divest NM speak for 30 min at NMERB Trustees meeting

First MythBusters document published

**August 2019 through
early March 2020**

The effort to demand that NMERB divest our educators' pension fund from the private prisons gathers steam and new partners: Albuquerque Teachers Federation, American Federation of Teachers NM, Teachers Against Child Detention, Millions for Prisoners NM, UNM Sanctuary Campus Working Group, Albuquerque Interfaith and Horizons Sustainable Financial Services.

August 28, 2019

Executive Director of NEA-New Mexico (National Education Association), sends an email representing the NEA-New Mexico Board of Directors and sharing the passage of a motion urging divestment; also states that they believe they can now be considered a 'petition signer'

September 24, 2019

UNM School of Law faculty letter to NMERB urging divestment

October 2019

Statement of the Prison Divest NM Campaign to divest from private, for-profit prisons

November 27, 2019

“A Slippery Slope” article published by Katherine Lewin in Santa Fe Reporter

December 5, 2019

Editorial in Santa Fe New Mexican
“To Change Private Prison System, Stop Investments”

January 2020

Santa Fe Public Schools letter to NMERB urging divestment

March 2020

Second MythBusters doc published

“Progress of the NMERB Divestment Campaign from Private, For-Profit Prison” progress report published featuring an abbreviated timeline and history of the Prison Divest NM movement.

October–December 2019

Albuquerque Teachers Federation (ATF) Representative Council directs the President to actively lobby the NMERB to divest from direct holdings in the private prison companies, CoreCivic and the Geo Group, in its educational pension fund:

Motion to Demand that the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB) Divest from Direct Holdings in the Private Prison Companies, CoreCivic and the Geo Group, in our Educational Pension Fund, submitted by Sonja Kortsch, Bandelier ES, Veronica Forester, Emerson ES, and Angela Reynolds, NEDC — Discussion Item-October 1, 2019; Action Item- December 3, 2019

February 8, 2020

Medicine Drum Circle (local grassroots activist group): discussions of civil disobedience, art actions, committee development, and goal development

April 14, 2020

Letter from Johann A Klaasser, Financial Planner and Investment Advisor with Horizons Sustainable Financial Services urging divestment on a financial basis

April 16, 2020

Letter from Santa Fe Dreamers' pro bono attorneys with legal analysis supporting divestment to Executive Director Jan Goodwin and NMERB member Mary Lou Cameron (NEA representative) with talking points about the private prison industry

Letter from ATF President Dr. E Bernstein to NMERB Board President (and NEA-NM representative) urging divestment

April 15, 2020

ABQ Journal front page article "ERB urged to divest from private prisons" ; NMERB Trustees moved to allow changes to the investment policy to allow for divestment from certain companies or sectors but refrained from actually moving to divest from private prisons.

April 19, 2020

Letter from Española Schools Superintendent to NMERB Executive Director urging divestment

June 19 2020

NMERB Meeting; Louise Kahn RN gives testimony to NMERB

July 2020

Third "MythBusters" document published

August 5, 2020

"Symbolic but Powerful," Santa Fe Reporter article by Katherine Lewin

August 7, 2020

Prison Divest NM billboard on I-40 goes up in ABQ just before August NMERB Trustee meeting

August 8, 2020

Op-Ed in Santa Fe New Mexican by Gaile Herling, "Retirees want private prisons out of pension funds"

August 12, 2020

fronteristxs collective creates large-scale projection and VJ event on former county jail in downtown ABQ

Prison Divest NM member begins attending UNM Retiree Association (UNM RA) Legislative Committee meetings: member raises the issue of appointments, term limits for NMERB... Prison Divest NM starts keeping closer tabs on NMERB board policies such as term limits, agenda setting, minutes, meeting notices, and their investment policy.

Algernon D'Ammassa, "Educators push New Mexico retirement board to divest from private prisons" *Las Cruces Sun News*

Hannah Colton, "Educators Urge N.M. Retirement Board To Divest From For-Profit Prisons And Migrant Detention" *KUNM*

Matthew Irwin, "Fronteristxs Against Private Prisons," *Santa Fe Reporter*

August 14, 2020

NMERB Trustees vote to delay the vote on divesting from private prisons

September 9, 2020

UNM Retiree Association (RA) Legislative Committee Meeting: UNM RA approves stance on NMERB divestment of private prison pension investments

October 2, 2020

fronteristxs collective hosts online press conference and banner drop at Sanitary Tortilla Factory.

October 16, 2020

DIVESTMENT VOTE at NMERB Trustees Meeting: SUCCESS!!

"Talking points about Private Prison Industry" published.

Santa Fe Reporter article by Katherine Lewin, "Going Down the Slope: NM Educational Board votes to eliminate private prisons from their investment portfolio"

Fourth MythBusters document published

November 6, 2020

Prison Divest NM Coalition Letter of thanks to NMERB and request for a timeline on divestment

November 8, 2020

Louise Kahn Op-Ed Albuquerque Journal
“[ERB right to help dismantle unjust prison system](#)”

November 11, 2020

ASUNM (Associated Students University of New Mexico) Associated Students Joint [Resolution 8F](#): Resolution introduced by: Ian May (A)(E), a student in Dr. Jennifer Tucker’s Community Development class, and Senator R. Regalado (A)(S)(F), Senator S. Mua (A)(S)(E), and Senator R. Harper (S)(E). Joint Resolution denouncing the use of private prisons and student tuition funds and fees to directly or indirectly contribute to retirement plans that invest in private prisons.

October 2021

Article in ABQ Journal by Adrian Gomez:
“[Billboards amplify plight of detained migrants](#)”

Letter from Sarah Manges to Matias Fontenla, appointee to the newly created AFT representative position on the NMERB, asking him to consider term limits for the trustees.



More Resources

[“The Detention Drain: How immigration detention hurts the New Mexico economy.”](#)

Karla Molinar Arvizo. Institute for Policy Studies and New Mexico Dream Team. August 2019.

[“Private Prisons and Investment Risks Part 2: How private prisons fuel mass incarceration—and how public pension funds are at risk.”](#)

American Federation of Teachers. 2019.

[“High Risk, Low Reward: The Business Case for Divesting from For-Profit Prisons.”](#)

esg transparency initiative, July 2020.

Credits

This toolkit was written, designed, and published by the Prison Divest NM Coalition.

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