

# A Woman in Both Houses: My Career in New Mexico Politics



By Pauline Eisenstadt  
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## REVIEWED BY KATIE ZIEGLER

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Pauline Eisenstadt didn't realize she was a trailblazer, the first woman to serve in both chambers of the New Mexico Legislature, until someone pointed it out. "It didn't seem like much at the time," she writes, "but I guess everyone likes to be a game changer because it opens up new possibilities for others. It provides an example for others to also follow if they wish."

Eisenstadt's memoir of how a citizen legislator found her way to politics is a worthwhile read for someone considering a run for office and for those with a particular interest in New Mexico.

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Eisenstadt acknowledges that although technology and the Internet have changed the landscape of campaigning and governing since she ran for office in the 1990s, much of her experience still holds true today. Political neophytes would do well to note just how many volunteers Eisenstadt relied upon for her campaigns, and how much time she devoted to making personal contact with voters.

She suggests "walking and talking to the voters" to be the most effective way to deliver your message and to learn about the issues. But the all-consuming nature of campaigning and legislating can be particularly challenging for women who also are family caregivers. In a nice, personal touch, Eisenstadt recognizes and thanks the women who assisted her with child care and other tasks while she was in office.

Eisenstadt's stories from inside the capitol (the Roundhouse, as they call it in Santa Fe) offer real-life examples of the kinds of tips NCSL gives to new legislators on how to be effective lawmakers. The importance of knowing the rules, understanding the budget

process, cultivating relationships, being willing to reach across the aisle and listening to constituents are all apparent through Eisenstadt's experiences. Some of the controversial issues she grappled with will be familiar to any political junkie: allocating capital project money, building new bridges, gambling, energy development, hate crimes and ethics legislation.

Eisenstadt also presents the lighter side of legislating, both in the experience of designating a state cookie and in the descriptions of the many friendships she made over the years.

NCSL features prominently in this book, as the former lawmaker recounts the value of learning from other state experiences during her tenure as a member of the NCSL Executive Committee.

Though readers from outside New Mexico may find some of the who's-who of state and local politics tedious, Eisenstadt's dedication to public service shines through as an example for up-and-comers. Her memoir is a valuable resource for those readers, female or male, who may wonder what it is really like to be an elected official.