



Administrative Office of the Courts

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New Mexico honored for providing free online public access to legal materials

SANTA FE – New Mexico has earned national recognition for offering free online public access to legal materials, including state laws, court procedural rules and appellate court decisions.

The Harvard Law School’s [Caselaw Access Project](#) recently recommended New Mexico and its legal information website, [NMOneSource.com](#), as a leading example of how courts can successfully expand access to the law through a publicly available website and shift from print-based legal publishing to “digital-first publishing.”

The New Mexico Compilation Commission, the state’s official legal publisher, began in May to offer [free online access](#) to an official database of legal materials, providing an easy-to-use research tool for the public and growing numbers of people who represent themselves in lawsuits.

Fastcase, an online legal research service, selected Brenda Castello, the commission’s executive director, as one of its [2019 Fastcase 50 winners](#). The awards recognize “innovators, techies, visionaries and leaders” in the legal field.

New Mexico launched its online legal website as a “major service to benefit the public,” Fastcase stated.

“Annotated statutes available for free ... are nearly unheard of,” Fastcase said. “Brenda’s approach has rapidly become the standard for how to implement free and open access to the law at all levels of government.”

Annotated statutes provide additional research information such as summaries of precedent-setting court decisions that can be cited in legal arguments filed in court cases. Previously this comprehensive legal information was available for New Mexico statutes only through a subscription.

“Expanding the availability of legal services to the public is critical for advancing judicial excellence in New Mexico,” Supreme Court Chief Justice Judith K. Nakamura said. “New Mexico’s online system offers a shining example for other states of how to use technology to

improve access to justice. This was possible thanks to the vision and hard work of Brenda and her staff at the Compilation Commission.”

Castello said, “No other state in the country offers such a robust, expansive website for free legal materials. People in New Mexico can use their smartphones and other electronic devices to easily access legal materials that in years past would have required a fee-based subscription or a trip to a law library.”

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