What Is Retake Our Democracy?
The RAT Pack & the Rapid Response Network?

What is Retake Our Democracy? Retake was formed after the Democratic Convention in 2016. Our purpose is to make it easier for you to effectively raise your voice and to advocate for social, racial, economic, gender, and climate justice, and to advocate for legislation, policies, and candidates who place people and the planet over profit. We focus on state and local issues, where it is easiest to create meaningful change and to have an impact. To achieve our goals, we engage, educate, organize, and activate a growing base of progressive power. We have developed evolving legislative and election strategies that operate at the state and local levels. To engage and educate our community, we host a website with a wide range of information, resources and tools; we blog 3-4 days a week; and we host a weekly 30-minute radio show on KSFR at 8:30am every Saturday.

Our first project was *Retake the Roundhouse,* through which we endorsed and supported seven good Democrats running for the NM State House in 2016. We canvassed, called, staged house parties, and otherwise encouraged folks to support these candidates. Five of these candidates won and we retook the Roundhouse. Certainly, many people and many other groups were involved in this success, but Retake played a role and began to learn how to build a power base.

What Is the Roundhouse Advocacy Team or RAT Pack? After the 2016 election, we began to focus on our developing legislative strategy. We had teams of individuals lobbying at the Roundhouse in both 2017 and 2018 and sent out action alerts asking people to show up or to write to their legislators. In truth, we were just getting our feet wet. We assumed that with a Democratic majority in each chamber, good bills would pass, forcing the Governor to veto them. That didn't happen. Many, many bills simply disappeared from sight. Frustrated, our team of about 5 folks began making calls to 20 experienced non-profit lobbyists like Common Cause, Planned Parenthood, and NM Voices for Children. We learned a good deal about how bills passed or languished and how much of the action was in committees. We learned which Democrats subtly undermined good legislation, and which bills our non-profit allies most wanted to see passed into law.

What is the Rapid Response Network? In late 2017, we developed an online survey comprised of 29 very good bills that had died during the legislative session. We used this survey to ask New Mexicans about their priorities, their State House and Senate Districts, and also about the degree to which they wanted to be involved at the Roundhouse. With contact info for most of these people, we used the list of about 1,200 to recruit canvassers for the races we supported in 2018. We supported 11 NM House Democrats; they all won. Again, lots of people were involved in this effort, but we played an even larger role than in 2016. So while we used the survey to engage people for the election, our primary purpose was to build a statewide network that would make it easy for voters throughout the state to effectively lobby their own representatives. For people signing up for the Network, Retake will send timely Action Alerts whenever one of their legislators will be voting on one of our bills in Committee or on the Floor. We created this statewide network because Legislators care more about the views of their constituents. But we need your help building the network.

There are roles you can play at home and in a few minutes a day and if you want to be more active, we will train you to be a volunteer advocate at the Roundhouse. We also have a Roundhouse Tool Kit under the Resource menu on our website. Our next meeting is Th. Dec 13 with another planned for Dec 20, both from 6-8pm at 1420 Cerrillos. To find out more, go to RetakeOurDemocracy.org and check out our Roundhouse Strategy in a document under the Actions and Events menu. That document is updated weekly.