

**FIFTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION, 2014**

February 19, 2014

Mr. Speaker:

Your **JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**, to whom has been referred

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR SENATE BILL 183**

has had it under consideration and reports same with recommendation that it **DO PASS**, amended as follows:

1. On page 1, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following new section:

"SECTION 1. Section 32A-4-18 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 112, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-18. CUSTODY HEARINGS--TIME LIMITATIONS--NOTICE--PROBABLE CAUSE.--

A. When a child alleged to be neglected or abused has been placed in the legal custody of the department or the department has petitioned the court for temporary custody, a custody hearing shall be held within ten days from the date the petition is filed to determine if the child should remain in or be placed in the department's custody pending adjudication. Upon written request of the respondent, the hearing may be held earlier, but in no event shall the hearing be held sooner than two days after the date the petition was filed.

B. The parent, guardian or custodian of the child alleged to be abused or neglected shall be given reasonable notice of the time and place of the custody hearing.

C. At the custody hearing, the court shall return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian unless probable cause exists to believe that:

(1) the child is suffering from an illness or injury, and the parent, guardian or custodian is not providing adequate care for the child;

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(2) the child is in immediate danger from the child's surroundings, and removal from those surroundings is necessary for the child's safety or well-being;

(3) the child will be subject to injury by others if not placed in the custody of the department;

(4) there has been an abandonment of the child by the child's parent, guardian or custodian; or

(5) the parent, guardian or custodian is not able or willing to provide adequate supervision and care for the child.

D. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, if the court determines that probable cause exists pursuant to Subsection C of this section, the court may:

(1) return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian upon such conditions as will reasonably ensure the safety and well-being of the child, including protective supervision by the department; or

(2) award legal custody of the child to the department.

E. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety.

F. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, if the court determines that probable cause does not exist pursuant to Subsection C of this section, the court shall:

(1) retain jurisdiction and, unless the court permits otherwise, order that the respondent and child remain in the jurisdiction of the court pending the adjudication;

(2) return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian with conditions to provide for the safety and well-being of the child; and

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(3) order that the child's parent, guardian or custodian allow the child necessary contact with the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

G. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, the court may order the respondent or the child alleged to be neglected or abused, or both, to undergo appropriate diagnostic examinations or evaluations. If the court determines that probable cause does not exist, the court may order the respondent or the child alleged to be neglected or abused, or both, to undergo appropriate diagnostic examinations or evaluations as necessary to protect the child's best interests, based upon the allegations in the petition and the evidence presented at the custody hearing. Copies of any diagnostic or evaluation reports ordered by the court shall be provided to the parties at least five days before the adjudicatory hearing is scheduled. The reports shall not be sent to the court.

H. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to custody hearings.

I. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a party aggrieved by an order entered pursuant to this section shall be permitted to file an immediate appeal as a matter of right. If the order appealed from grants the legal custody of the child to or withholds it from one or more of the parties to the appeal, the appeal shall be expedited and shall be heard at the earliest practicable time. While an appeal pursuant to this section is pending, the court shall have jurisdiction to take further action in the case pursuant to Subsection B of Section 32A-1-17 NMSA 1978.

[F.] J. Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the rights of Indian children pursuant to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978."".

2. Renumber the succeeding sections accordingly.

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Respectfully submitted,

Gail Chasey, Chairwoman

Adopted _____
(Chief Clerk)

Not Adopted _____
(Chief Clerk)

Date _____

The roll call vote was 15 For 0 Against
Yes: 15
No: 0
Excused: Garcia, MP, Gentry
Absent: None

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