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Enabling Acts of 1876 and 1893

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Enabling Acts of 1876 and 1893

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Several attempts at statehood marked the late nineteenth century. While politicians in both Washington and New Mexico worked to get the territory admitted, success proved elusive.

In 1876, Congressional delegate Stephen B. Elkins secured the passage of an enabling act for New Mexico statehood. The Senate passed the measure handily and issued a **report** (<http://econtent.unm.edu/u/?Manuscripts,2340>) citing the territory's growing economy and population as evidence that "New Mexico should be admitted as a state without further delay." Despite such strong support, the bill languished in the House of Representatives. Although the House did not vote against the measure, their inaction forestalled statehood.

The 1880s saw no new proposals for statehood, largely because the flurry of economic and social changes brought on by the railroad's arrival to territory in 1880 occupied the attentions of New Mexico's politicians.

In 1889, George Prichard proposed that the territorial legislature call a constitutional convention. Although no enabling act had been passed on a federal level to convene, Prichard and his supporters thought an established constitution would demonstrate the territory's earnest desire for statehood. After a year of political wrangling over the number and election of delegates as well as the particulars of the document, the convention submitted a **constitution** (<http://econtent.unm.edu/u/?Manuscripts,2324>) to Congress in support of their request for a new enabling act.

Many people in New Mexico, those who were politically prominent and among the general population, clamored for statehood. However, there were those who felt the timing wasn't right or believed that circumstances required the postponement of statehood. The dissenters always had a voice in the debate. Their **protest** (<http://econtent.unm.edu/u/?Manuscripts,2337>) against admission was submitted to congress in 1889. Nonetheless, the effort in support of statehood continued.

In 1893, Senator Charles Faulkner of West Virginia sponsored a **bill** (<http://econtent.unm.edu/u/?Manuscripts,5875>) to enable the people of New Mexico to write a constitution, elect officials of a state government, and join the Union as a state.

Many other bills for statehood received support in the house and the Senate in the late nineteenth century. An **1896 report** (<http://econtent.unm.edu/u/?Manuscripts,2358>) favoring statehood listed many of them while enumerating the reasons that New Mexico deserved statehood.

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