

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release

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SENATE REVIEW: March 10, 2013

Senate Passes Bill to Require School Board Candidates From Larger Districts to Report Sources of Contributions

A bill that would require candidates running for school boards to report the source of all campaign contributions if they raise or spend more than \$1,000 was passed by the Senate on Sunday afternoon. Senate Bill 90, sponsored by Senator Michael Padilla (Bernalillo, District 14), specifically requires candidates running for boards whose student population registers more than 12,000 in a district.

SB 90, which passed on a 24-18 vote, will also require candidates in municipalities with populations over 5,000 people to report their funding sources if they spend or raise more than the limit. The original bill did not have a population limit but was amended earlier in the session by the Senate Rules Committee, which set the threshold of 12,000 students and raised the contribution/expenditure amount from \$200 to \$1,000.

A failed floor amendment during debate of the bill sought to restore SB90 to its original version to include all school board candidates so that those running in the smaller districts of the state would also be required to report. The bill exempts the reporting requirements if a candidate raises or spends less than \$1,000.

“People want transparency,” Senator Padilla said during debate of the amendment. “I agree with you that all candidates should have to report, but this is a good place to start. People want to know if a candidate is funded by out-of-state-dollars or someone with an agenda.”

Several senators from the smaller communities of the state contended that by requiring all school board candidates to report contributions, it would actually discourage candidates from running. One senator also contended that some of the county clerks in sparsely populated regions would be burdened by the additional paperwork.

However, Senator Padilla said that all reporting requirements would have to be reported to the Secretary of State and not county offices. He said Secretary of State Dianna Duran has endorsed the bill.

“The potential for abuse is huge in these races,” said Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25). “It’s what the voters want – who’s pushing these candidates?”

The bill now heads to the House of Representatives for review.

Bill Encourages Separate Court for Animal Abuse Cases in Bernalillo County

The Senate Rules Committee granted a do-pass on Sunday to a bill that would formally request the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court establish a specialty court to solely handle animal-abuse cases.

Senate Memorial 78, sponsored by Senator Jacob Candelaria (Bernalillo, District 26), states that although there are already measures in place that address the issue of animal abuse, the dilemma continues to plague the state and, specifically, Bernalillo County, which has had many disconcerting incidents of people abusing animals that were widely publicized in the media.

The memorial touches upon that studies that have shown a strong connection between animal abuse and human violence, and that efforts to address animal abuse could have a positive effect on preventing other types of violent behavior. The memorial now heads to the floor for a vote.

Senate Passes Bill to Make Railroads Repair Livestock Fences in Timely Manner

The Senate passed a bill Sunday that would make commercial railroads repair or replace damaged livestock fencing adjacent to its tracks a more timely matter. Senate Bill 326, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Mary Kay Papen (Dona Ana, District 38), allows railroad companies 30 days -- after a landowner gives them notice of a damaged livestock fence -- to begin construction or show intent to begin repair. If landowners begin repairs themselves after the notice, they can seek reimbursement for the repairs.

If the landowners is not reimbursed for their work after 30 days SB326 stipulates that landowners could lawfully collect twice times as much as the repair costs plus any cost of litigation, including attorney fees. Narrow-gauge and recreational railroads would be exempt, as well as the state Department of Transportation, which owns 132 miles of railroad track in

Valencia, Bernalillo, Sandoval and Santa Fe counties and serves the New Mexico RailRunner Express, Burlington Northern & Santa Fe, Amtrak, and the Santa Fe Southern Railways.

Senate Passes Alternate School Grading Scale For Schools With High Numbers of At-Risk students

Senate Bill 370, School Rating Modified Assessment Formula, passed the Senate floor this evening on a 27-14 vote.

The bill, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez (Bernalillo, Valencia, District 29) would create an alternative to the A–F school grading method for schools that qualify as Supplemental Accountability Model (SAM) schools.

Two administrators from “D” and “F” schools have told senators in committee that with the uncertain stability of their student body, their schools could never growth points on the Standards Based Assessments (SBA) scale and are at a disadvantage to achieve a higher school grade. Under the new grading formula, schools where 75 percent of students are considered “at risk” would qualify as SAM schools and would be graded on an alternative calculation than provided for by the A–F system.

To qualify as a SAM school, at least three-quarters of the student body would need to meet one or more of the following criteria: a history, or family history, of incarceration or “extended or significant involvement” in the court system; a history of involvement with gangs; are pregnant or have children; a history of physical or mental health issues, such as abuse, neglect, or drug or alcohol use, and chronic or severe medical conditions; a history of discipline issues; a history of unexcused absences or truancy; withdrew from school for at least one semester; a history of academic performance below their grade level; a history of not meeting academic expectations vis-à-vis their individualized education plans; and disabilities or special needs.

Senate Passes Social Media Privacy Act for Students and Sends Bill to House

On a vote of 29-13, the Senate on Sunday passed Senate Bill 422, sponsored by Senator Jacob Candelaria (Bernalillo, District 26), which would prohibit public and private universities from requesting social-media passwords from applicants.

“Where this has been a problem is for potential University athletes,” said Senator Candelaria said when asked about the bill. “Coaches request passwords or access to Facebook or Twitter

accounts. Students have a right to their privacy and this bill would shore up loose ends and put a mechanism in place to deter this activity.”

Senator Candelaria has a similar bill prohibiting employers from requesting passwords from job applicants. The bill has already passed the Senate and is in the House Judiciary Committee.

In other Senate Action:

* Notable statement: “It’s like getting the camel’s nose under the tent,” Senator Phil Griego (Bernalillo, Lincoln, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Torrance, Valencia, District 39) said while arguing against an amendment to Senate Bill 90, which would have eliminated district population limits on school board candidates having to report campaign contributors.

* Notable statements: “I have 3,000 friends on my Facebook, I’m very popular” said Senator Jacob Candelaria (Bernalillo, District 26) during floor debate of his Senate Bill 422. Later in the debate, “I was just informed by Senator Keller that I only have 2,400 friends on my Facebook so I’m not as popular as I thought.”

* Notable statement: “Mr. Chair, if I voted ‘No’, please change it to ‘Yes’,” Senator Sue Wilson Beffort (R, Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Torrance, District 19) said after an alphabetical hand-count vote was taken regarding a floor amendment Sunday to SB 90.