

# ***NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS***

For immediate release

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## **SENATE REVIEW: February 28, 2013**

### **Senate Passes Bill That Would Require Super PACs to Reveal Donor Identities**

A bill that would require independent expenditure committees, more commonly known as Super PACs, operating in the state to disclose the identities of their donors unanimously passed the Senate on Thursday afternoon. An amended version of SB 15, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe-District 25), clarifies language in the state's Campaign Reporting Act that was declared unconstitutional.

SB 15 would require independent expenditure committees that donate any amount more than \$800 within a one-year period to disclose the source of their funds. The committee would also have to register with the Secretary of State's office within three days of making a contribution to an electoral candidate if they spent more than \$3,000 on a campaign, and register within 24 hours if the expenditure exceeded \$5,000.

"This bill gives voters the information they need to make informed decisions in the voting booth," said Senator Wirth. "This bill essentially cleans up a string of unconstitutional language in our laws."

The bill also specifies that any political advertisements that cost more than \$800 and are financed by any individual, committee or organization be required to include the name of the candidate who authorized the advertisement or whose committee authorized it. Otherwise, if it wasn't authorized, the name, phone number or web address of the person who authorized and paid for the advertisement must be displayed on advertisements.

Advertisements must also be clear on what issue or candidate the literature is supporting, opposing or remaining neutral about. Each violation is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, not to exceed \$20,000. In addition, the bill authorized the state Attorney General's Office to pursue legal action against violators without a request by the Secretary of State's Office.

### **Home Visiting Accountability Act passes Senate Floor**

Senate Bill 365, Home Visiting Accountability Act, sponsored by Senator John Sapien (D, Bernalillo, Sandoval, Dist. 9) unanimously passed the Senate floor Thursday afternoon. This bill

is a follow up from Senator Sapien's 2011 Early Childhood Education Act. Home visiting was one of seven components included in the 2011 Act.

According to SB 365, Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) would be given authority to increase the accountability and effectiveness of home visiting programs. The nine objectives to increase accountability and effectiveness are: improve prenatal, maternal, infant or child health outcomes, including reducing pre-term births; promote positive parenting practices; build healthy parent and child relationships; enhance children's social-emotional and language development; support children's cognitive and physical development; improve the health of eligible families; provide resources and supports that may help to reduce child maltreatment and injury; increase children's readiness to succeed in school; improve coordination of referrals for, and the provision of, other community resources and supports for eligible families.

Senator Sapien said, "This bill is our continued effort to create the early childhood education business plan and model for the state."

The department would be required to consult with one or more home visiting experts to evaluate the programs and provide an annual report to the Governor, Legislature and the Early Learning Advisory Council. One amendment added in Senate Public Affairs requires CYFD to adopt rules by which to operate.

The bill will now be sent to the House of Representatives.

### **Bill Would Allow Whistleblowers to Remain Anonymous**

On a vote of 37-2, the Senate passed Senate Bill 395, Public Works Whistleblower Confidentiality, sponsored by Senator Carlos Cisneros (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos, District 6).

The bill adds a requirement to the Public Works Minimum Wage Act that prohibits the director of Labor Relations Division of the Workforce Solutions Department (WSD) from disclosing the name or other identifying information of an employee who reports violations of the Public Works Minimum Wage Act without the prior consent of the employee.

SB395 now heads to the House for consideration.

### **SENATE PASSES MEMORIAL THAT CALLS FOR AGENCIES TO ADDRESS WILDLIFE COLLISIONS WITH MOTORISTS**

The Senate passed a memorial Thursday that calls for a workshop conducted by various government agencies to determine what areas of the state are most likely to have incidents where motorists collide with wildlife on the road.

Senate Memorial 11, sponsored by Senator Howie Morales (Catron, Grant, Socorro, District 28), calls for the state Department of Game and Fish to team up with the Department of Transportation and the University of New Mexico's Department of Government Research to identify where such collisions occur, compile a list of sections of roads where such collisions have occurred and send a report to an interim legislative agency with the results.

The memorial also encourages the departments to apply for Highway Safety Improvement funding to establish wildlife safety zones in the identified areas. The memorial cites U.S. 64 in northern Rio Arriba County near Chama as one problematic place where automobiles often collide with animals, an occurrence that goes unreported about half the time.

Wildlife safety zones that have shown to reduce such collisions have already been implemented in Colorado, Idaho, Florida, California, Pennsylvania, Washington and Arizona. The memorial now heads to the House of Representatives.

### **In other Senate action:**

\* The media and education world is abuzz over tomorrow's scheduled Senate Rules Committee hearing on the appointment of Hanna Skandera, the oft-controversial cabinet secretary-designee of the Public Education Department. In what is expected to be an intermittent review lasting well into the weekend, the committee hearing is sure to draw plenty of curious onlookers. Be sure to catch the webcast of the hearing, which is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. on the New Mexico Legislature website:

[http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/webcast/default\\_session.aspx](http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/webcast/default_session.aspx)

\* In what turned out to be a hardy presentation of education initiatives, five Democratic senators outlined their current legislation, which is still alive and well, to support our teachers and students in a roundtable discussion before the press and public on Thursday morning. Watch a clip of the action here: <http://www.nmsenate.com/2013/02/28/watch-senators-tout-their-education-bills-during-22813-press-conference/>