

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release
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SENATE REVIEW: March 6, 2013

Leveling the Playing Field for All New Mexicans

The Senate Leadership will be available for a roundtable discussion with the media and public on Thursday at 10 a.m. in Capitol Room 326. On hand to field questions will be Majority Floor Leader Michael S. Sanchez (Bernalillo, Valencia, District 29), Majority Whip Tim Keller (Bernalillo, District 17), Majority Caucus Chairman Jacob Candelaria (Bernalillo, District 26), Senate Conservation Committee Chairman Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25) and Vice-Chairman Senator Benny Shendo (Bernalillo, McKinley, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Sandoval, District 22), and Senate Rules Committee Vice-Chairman Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto (Bernalillo, District 15).

The Senate Democrats, who are responding to the influence of out-of-state special interests in New Mexico with proposed legislation that seeks to instill fairness in our economy and elections, will discuss the need to close tax loopholes that allow large out-of-state corporations to benefit on the backs of small, local businesses. Policymakers are calling for a comprehensive tax system, instead of risking death-by-a-thousand cuts, the plan implemented by the administration.

“With over 400 loopholes, our tax policy looks like Swiss cheese,” Senator Keller said. “We must modernize our tax system to set the stage for growth and make funds available for programs like education.”

Out-of-state special interests also benefit from elections and campaign financing laws in New Mexico. With each election cycle, the influence of outside money becomes more prominent. New Mexicans deserve transparency in campaign financing and to have their voting rights protected.

“A key proposal in one of my bills is the definition of coordination between Super PACs and candidates,” Senator Wirth added. “It also provides more clarity in terms of disclosing donors. We saw the lines blurred last cycle. While we can’t prevent Super PACs from spending

unlimited corporate dollars, we can prevent coordination with campaigns and require them to disclose donors. This allows voters to make informed decisions at the polls.”

Join key Senate Democrats for an unscripted discussion about these pressing issues.

House Bill Establishing Office of the Superintendent Clears Senate Committee

The Senate Rules Committee on Wednesday unanimously voted a do-pass of House Bill 444, sponsored by Representative Thomas C. Taylor (R, San Juan, District 1), that will remove the Insurance Division from the oversight of the Public Regulation Commission and establish the Office of Superintendent of Insurance as an independent agency.

The bill, which is the result of a constitutional amendment approved by the voters in 2012, establishes a nine-member insurance nominating committee to appoint or remove the superintendent of insurance.

“The committee is designed to be as apolitical as possible,” John G. Franchini, the current superintendent of insurance, told the committee. Franchini, who has been superintendent since 2010, said the office will be under the executive branch but also accountable to the Legislature.

The committee will consist of four members appointed by the Legislative Council -- no more than two from the same political party -- two from the insurance industry and two representing insurance consumers. Four members will be appointed by the governor -- no more than two from the same political party -- two from the insurance industry and two representing insurance consumers; and a ninth member selected by the other eight, who shall be either a former New Mexico superintendent of Insurance or another person with extensive knowledge of insurance regulation in New Mexico.

The newly appointed director will be paid on the same scale as cabinet members in the executive branch and serve in unlimited terms of four years. The first designated superintendent will only serve from July 2013 until December 31, 2015, before the established four-year terms are implemented.

HB 45 also removes the Public Regulation Commission from acting on appeals of the insurance superintendent’s decisions and transfers that authority to the state Court of Appeals. The bill now heads to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Powerful Senate Finance Committee Passes “Breaking Bad” Bill

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The Senate Finance Committee voted 9 to 1 to pass House Majority Whip Antonio “Moe” Maestas' bipartisan “Breaking Bad Bill.” HB 379 would increase the state's film rebate to 30 percent for TV series shooting at least six episodes in New Mexico and would also carry forward up to \$10 million in unused film tax credit funds for use in future years.

“The Breaking Bad Bill passing the Senate Finance Committee is a huge victory for the New Mexico film industry and I thank the committee Chairman, Senator John Arthur Smith, for hearing this critical legislation,” said Representative Maestas. “New Mexicans need jobs, good paying jobs, and this legislation will boost our economy sending a strong message to the film and TV industry. My bill's five percent rebate increase for TV productions filming in New Mexico is a critical investment because we know that successful TV shows employ New Mexicans and also purchase goods and services from local small businesses for consecutive years.”

Maestas (Bernalillo, District 16) continued, “HB 379’s year-to-year carry forward provision will not only attract more film productions to New Mexico by making unused funds available in future years, but it also maintains budget stability which is a priority of the administration. Additionally, I’m very proud that this legislation protects New Mexico workers, ensuring that they are the individuals who will benefit from the new jobs created by this bill.”

The bill now goes to the Senate floor for a vote.

In other Senate Action:

* The Senate on Wednesday confirmed the appointment of Scott P. Bodegain to serve on the State Game Commission. During debate of the appointment, Bodegain was described as the epitome of a cowboy. Former lawmaker Leonard Lee Rawson was also confirmed by the Senate as a reappointment to serve on the State Investment Council.

* Listen in to KSFR 101.1 FM tomorrow (Thursday, March 7) at noon to hear an interview with Senator Tim Keller on the drivers license debate and the Senate Public Affairs Committee vote on Senate Bill 521. Also, catch updates on what happened in the state House of Representatives regarding an attempt Wednesday afternoon to revive the House version of the bill. The interview will also be available online at <http://www.ksfr.org/>