

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release

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Senate Republicans Openly Oppose ‘Fair Pay for Women Act’

Saturday on the Senate floor, two of three Republican female state Senators argued and voted against Representative Brian Egolf’s House Bill 216, Fair Pay for Women Act. The bill would assure fair pay for women in the workplace. The Fair Pay for Women Act prohibits employers from paying different wages for the same work and also establishes a grievance procedure to file lawsuits for being paid unfair wages.

Senator Sue Wilson Beffort, (R, Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Torrance, District 19) and Senator Gay Kernan (R, Chaves, Eddy, Lea, District 42) voted against the House version of the bill and 12 Republican Senators voted against identical Senate Bill 402, sponsored by Senator Linda Lopez (D, Bernalillo, District 11).

Voting against paying women a fair wage were Senator Ron Griggs (R) Dona Ana, Eddy, Otero, District 34, Senator Gay Kernan, Senator Craig Brandt (R, Sandoval, District 40), Senator Mark Moores (R, Bernalillo, District 21), Senator Lee Cotter (R, Dona Ana, District 36), Senator Carroll Leavel (R) Eddy, Lea, District 41), Senator Sue Wilson Beffort, Senator John Ryan (R, Bernalillo, Sandoval, District 10), Senator William Payne (R, Bernalillo, District 20), Senator Cliff Pirtle (R, Chaves, Eddy, Otero, District 32), Senator William Sharer (R, San Juan, District 1), and Senator Stuart Ingle (R, Chaves, Curry, De Baca, Lea, Roosevelt, District 27).

Senator Nancy Rodriguez (Santa Fe, District 24) commented on the vote, saying, “In the 21st century I would hope this is something we would all agree on. Pay equity for women isn’t something that we should have to legislate.”

Skandera Confirmation Continues; Committee Makes an 'IPRA' Request

The third day of Public Education Department (PED) Secretary Designate Hanna Skandera's confirmation hearing brought several hours of questions from Senate Rules Committee members. Questioning from Senate Democrats shed light on potential procurement code violations with respect to an online charter school in Farmington, misuse of time from PED staff creating controversial email lists, and connections to Reform NM Now Director Jay McCleskey and the possible use of a PED email list for political purposes.

Rules Chair Senator Linda Lopez (D, Bernalillo, Dist. 11) adjourned the committee to give the Secretary-designate time to provide documents that were requested by committee members.

Senator Lopez said, "The Secretary-designate's confirmation will continue next week, after the requested documents have been given to the committee. This is an important confirmation and we have to give ample time for members to ask questions and reach an educated decision."

The documents requested include: any agreements between PED and New Mexico Connections Academy LLC or any New Mexico Connections related entity; financial statements from PED regarding payments made to New Mexico Connections LLC and K-12 LLC; the initial email list Secretary-designate Skandera requested from PED; the email list used by PED to send monthly newsletters; the email list given to Jay McCleskey by PED; a copy of the IPRA request from Michael Corwin; and the Attorney General's statement regarding the use of state emails.

Youth Leaders Would Be Required to Report Suspicion of Child Abuse

Leaders of youth organizations such as Little League or the Boy Scouts would be required to report any reasonable suspicion that a child under their supervision is being neglected or abused, according to a House bill passed by the Senate Public Affairs Committee on Friday.

House Bill 86, sponsored by Representative Brian Egolf (D, Santa Fe, District 47), would specifically target leaders in youth clubs, organizations or teams who are closely involved with children as part of their activities, some which are identified in the bill as leaders of sports clubs, 4-H organizations, scouts and others. The bill also would require that if a child is suspected of "sexting," he or she should also be reported.

Although the existing Abuse and Neglect Act includes professionals as well as all regular persons to report such abuse, this bill specifies youth leaders, who would be required like the others already identified in the law to immediately report their suspicions to a law enforcement agency, tribal law enforcement or social services agencies for Native American children.

The bill, which also adds the definition of an “abused children” to include sexual abuse or exploitation, now heads to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

In other Senate action:

* On Saturday, the Senate approved the appointments of Salvatore Baragilola, Mark Koson, and Dan Salzwedel to the New Mexico Lottery Authority; and Al Berryman to the Employers Mutual Company Board of Directors.

* On a 4-3 vote on Friday, the Senate Rules Committee voted down Senate Joint Resolution 8, Elected Police Review Boards, that would have given counties and local governments to legal steps to create elected police review boards. “This is a statewide issue,” stated Andres Valdez, a proponent of SJR 8, which was sponsored by Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino (Bernalillo, District 12).

* The Senate passed a bill Saturday that would require growers and sellers of chile to ensure their produce was grown in the state if they advertise it as “New Mexico” chile. The bill would amend current law to include those selling the distinctive New Mexico product at farmers markets and roadside stands. The bill heads to the floor for a vote.

* Notable question asked by Senator John Arthur Smith to members of the Senate Finance Committee on Saturday night: “How can we have a 4 to 4 vote if there’s 9 of us?”