

Final Legislative Report--2018

Scott Scanland

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Harry,

The Second Session of the 53rd New Mexico Legislature began at Noon on Tuesday, January 16, 2018. It was a 30 day session that ended at Noon on Thursday, February 15, 2018.

The Governor's bill signing/veto period ended at Noon Wednesday March 7, 2018. This is your final Legislative Report for this just completed Session. Some thoughts about the 2018 Session:

1. The budget situation turned from scary to good over the course of a couple of months in late 2017. This Session had lots of extra money that was spent mostly on building reserves up and repaying most funds that were tapped during the past few Sessions...except that the school reserves were not fully refunded.
2. Governor Martinez officially became a lame duck today as she completed her responsibility to sign, veto or pocket veto legislation for the last time (unless there is a Special Session between now and December 31, 2018 which no one thinks is going to happen.) This Session saw a real lack of energy...it seemed like all involved is ready to turn the page and start a new administration which will happen on January 1, 2019 after the November elections.
3. The Governor signed 80 bills and vetoed 31 — last year she rejected more than half the bills. This year's margin was a little less than 30% vetoes.
4. I still think momentum is building for tax reform. I still think it will be the "it" issue over the next few years especially with a new Governor. I suspect some of the dynamics will change with the election and so statesmanship is going to be needed to tackle some tough issues revolving around tax issues. Stay tuned on this issue.
5. Regardless who wins the House and the Governor's office, look for a "progressive" push coming from the Legislature.

Back to the budget...here is a quick story on the budget...

Gov. Martinez signs \$6.3B budget with some vetoes

By [Dan Boyd / Journal Capitol Bureau Chief](#)
Wednesday, March 7th, 2018 at 12:30pm



SANTA FE, N.M. — In what might end up being one of her final major acts as New Mexico’s governor, Susana Martinez has signed into law a \$6.3 billion spending plan for the budget year that starts in July.

Unlike last year, when she struck down huge chunks of the budget approved by lawmakers, Martinez used her line-item veto authority sparingly, axing only about \$12 million from the bill.

However, she did strike down some budget language, including a provision that would have given teachers unions the ability to decide whether to participate in a bonus pay plan for high-ranking educators.

“It’s my please to report I’ll be handling the next governor a balanced budget,” Martinez said during a news conference at a State Police substation in Albuquerque. “The next governor will have it much better than I did when I came in.”

Martinez, who took office in 2011, will step down at the end of this year. She has clashed with the Democratic-controlled Legislature in recent years over budgetary matters, but a recent influx of new revenue seemed to soften debate during this year’s 30-day session.

The budget signed into law today by Martinez will provide a funding infusion for public schools, Medicaid, and crime-fighting efforts in Albuquerque. It will also provide across-the-board pay raises for state workers and teachers for the first time since 2014.

While most state workers will get a 2 percent pay raise, State Police and corrections officers will be among those — at 8.5 percent — receiving even larger salary increases.

Overall, the budget will increase state spending by about \$248 million — or 4 percent — over current levels.

It will also set aside more than \$632 million — or roughly 10 percent of state spending — in cash reserves. The reserves were depleted last year, after two consecutive years of lower-than-expected revenue collections prompted spending cuts and other cost-saving moves.

“I think the funding (situation) is much better,” Martinez told reporters.

“Businesses don’t want to come to a state that can’t balance its budget.”

“Things are going to go well if we just can continue to maintain that same type of thinking,” she added.

So with that, we close the books on the 2018 Session and look forward to the 2019 Session. The 2018 campaign season has arrived where all 70 House seats will be up for election along with the Governor's race. None of the Senate is up for election in 2018. We will know who's running for the House on Tuesday March 13th. We know that six members of the House are not running for reelection. The R's will make a push to take control of the House as they did in 2014. The D's look to gain a couple of seats to make their margins larger.

We know now that the R's will run Congressman Steve Pearce for Governor. The D's are running Jeff Apodaca, State Senator Joe Cervantes, Peter DeBenedittis and Congresswoman Michele Lujan Grisham. The D's are having their preprimary convention this weekend so we might see one or two dropouts--or not. The primary election is Tuesday June 5th and the General election is Tuesday November 6, 2018. The 2019 Session begins on Tuesday January 15, 2019 and it will last for 60 days.

I have to give a huge "Thanks", as always, to Tennille "The Rock" Taylor who holds down the office chores and keeps all organized. I'm big on loyalty and Tennille has put up with my middle of the night calls, text messages and emails for over 15 years while also juggling a busy life, giving violin lessons and running a business of her own. She is solid. Thank you again to Tennille.

I have also been fortunate to be joined this year by Carrie Robin "Grasshopper" Brunder. This was her tenth Session but her first as a freelance lobbyist. Many of you met her or dealt with her during this Session. She is super smart and is going to be a superstar lobbyist in the years to come.

Your humble lobbyist was honored again to be ranked as a "Top Lobbyist" by the Albuquerque Business First magazine. I have earned this ranking for the last five years running. That, along with being the only invited New Mexico lobbyist to join the National Association of State Lobbyists, keeps us in some pretty lofty professional status. In addition to all this, 2019 will mark my 30th anniversary as a full time, professional lobbyist. I did three years of non-paid lobbying as an elected village Councilor on behalf of my community before I began working with Odis Echols in 1989 as a paid lobbyist. I am blessed to still have several clients who have been with me all these years including Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino, Los Alamos County and the City of Farmington.

Speaking of the City of Farmington, I do want to acknowledge the great Mayor Tommy Roberts. Mayor Roberts chose not to run for reelection as Mayor. He served on the Farmington City Council and has been Mayor since 2010. Farmington has been blessed with great, great Mayors and Tommy Roberts continued that tradition. I also remember

rooting for him when he was a guard for the NM Lobo basketball teams in the early 1970's. Thank you for your service Mayor Roberts. Farmington is facing some tough times but I know Mayor-elect Nate Duckett, the City Council and staff are up to the job.

The interims will begin in late May (although the LFC is meeting this month already!) and we will be off again preparing for the next 60-day Session. Thank you for your confidence in me. Please feel free to call me any time at 505-280-2122. I'll be in touch.