

Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández answers a few Gallup Sun questions to kick off 2022

Written by By Beth Blakeman Managing Editor
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Toward the end of 2021, the *Sun* sent out a few questions about plans for the new year. One of those who responded was Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, D- N.M.

On the topic of infrastructure, Rep. Leger Fernández said she wanted the Superman Bridge fixed so school buses can pick up students.

“I voted for the Infrastructure and Jobs bill, because it will repair and rebuild 207 bridges and over 3,822 miles of highway in poor condition,” she said. “The \$2.5 billion for federal-aid highway apportioned programs, \$225 million for bridge replacement and repairs, and \$40.5 million for the electric vehicle charging is a great Christmas present for our road-weary travelers.”

She also addressed herself to issues that linger, one of which is substance abuse, which took the lives of two of her brothers.

“I am proud that the American Rescue Plan, which I voted for, included more than \$16 million for New Mexico for behavioral health,” she stated. “Fifty-seven-thousand-dollars was for suicide prevention at Navajo Tech, in particular.”

She added that she is working on new bipartisan legislation to help address drug overdose and

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substance use issues for college students.

In considering the three best changes that could come to Gallup, Leger Fernández named water, broadband access, and Tribal funding as things coming from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act.

“Next, we need to invest in education, our local businesses, and in bringing down the cost of healthcare,” she emphasized.

In considering Navajo Nation issues, she focused on water.

“In addition to fully funding the Indian Water Settlements, I am thrilled that I secured \$67 million for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project in the FY22 House Appropriations bills and \$12 billion for Indian Country in the Infrastructure bill,” she said.

In terms of one of the best changes that could come to New Mexico, the representative said she couldn’t pick just one.

“I think our beautiful and beautifully diverse state could benefit from economic development, investment in our education, workforce, and health care,” she said. “We should improve access to infrastructure and that includes affordable housing, connecting New Mexicans to broadband, and improving water infrastructure.

“At its core, we need to invest in the infrastructure that will allow our communities to not just survive, but thrive,” she continued.

Winding up her gaze into a legislative crystal ball of dreams, Leger Fernández said if money were no object, she would make the extension of the Child Tax Credit permanent to reduce child poverty and help families.

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She would also secure House passage of her Just Transition for Energy Communities Act.

“This bill invests in and provides opportunities to diversify businesses in our energy communities that produced the coal, oil, and gas that fueled our nation’s growth,” she explained.

She also said she would pass the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 2021 to provide compensation to uranium miners and downwinders – many of whom live in and around Gallup.

And to keep within the celebratory spirit of the holiday, she shared her family Tamale recipe at [https://twitter.com/RepTeresaLF/status/ 1475935326287941633?s=20](https://twitter.com/RepTeresaLF/status/1475935326287941633?s=20)

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