

Special Session ends

Written by By Beth Blakeman Associate Editor
Friday, 03 July 2020 01:43



Numerous timely issues addressed

Navigating the global financial uncertainty brought about by the novel coronavirus was one of the goals of New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in calling the first special session of the 54th New Mexico Legislature, which began on June 18 and ended June 22.

Lujan Grisham said she received what she was seeking, a bipartisan roadmap that can be used to move forward in the coming months.

“My administration has from day one emphasized the importance of expanding the state’s reserves; I am glad to have done that work on the front end, which has ensured our state will have needed flexibility as we move forward. In our fiscal approach, a responsible and responsive final product, a state government that meets New Mexicans directly where their

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needs are, has been and will always be the ultimate goal.”

She went on to say that the work of rebuilding our state economy has only begun.

“I look forward to thoroughly evaluating the amended state budget and the additional legislation now headed to my desk in the coming weeks,” she said.

Also coming to the governor’s desk will be legislation addressing small business relief, civil rights, public safety reform, and election reform.

- Among the bills introduced, was Senator Clemente Sanchez, D-McKinley Cibola, Socorro, Valencia,’s *Unemployment Calculation Changes Bill* (SB13), which as of June 24, was in the Senate Committees Committee. The bill adjusts the manner in which benefits paid to unemployed individuals shall be charged to their employers.

The companion bill in the house has five sponsors, including: Representatives Rod Montoya, R-San Juan, Patricio Ruiloba, D-Bernalillo, Randal S. Crowder, R-Curry, William “Bill” R. Rehm, R-Bernalillo, and Candie G. Sweetser, D-Grant, Hidalgo, Luna.

- In the House, the *New Mexico Civil Rights Commission Bill*, (HB5) is sponsored by Representatives Brian Egolf, D-Santa Fe, Karen C. Bash, D-Bernalillo, and Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino, D-Bernalillo, creates the New Mexico Civil Rights Commission, providing recommendations on a private right of action for violations of state constitutional rights and providing recommendations for the termination or limitation of qualified immunity, declaring an emergency and requiring a report by Nov. 15.

This bill passed the house 53-17 and passed the senate 32-9

The *Small Business Recovery Act of 2020* (SB3) sponsored by Senators Jacob Candelaria, D-Bernalillo, John M. Sapien, D-Bernalillo, Sandoval, Sander Rue, R-Bernalillo, and

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Representatives Daymon Ely, D-Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Marian Matthews, D-Bernalillo creates the

Small Business Recovery Loan Fund, providing small business recovery loans and provides for the investment of the severance tax permanent fund in certain loans. It passed 26-11 in the senate and passed 59-5 in the house.

Representative Patricia A. Lundstrom, D-McKinley, San Juan, introduced House Bill 1, the *General Appropriation Act Sinding*

which reduces appropriations for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021, changing certain requirements provided for in Laws 2020, Chapter 83 and Laws 2019, Section 271; reducing operating budgets and appropriating legislative cash balances for the expenses of the 54th legislature, as well as extending the expenditure period for an appropriation for census outreach.

The bill passed the house 46-24 and passed the senate 30-12.

- Temporary election changes were addressed in Senate Bill 4 by representatives Daniel A. Ivey-Soto, D-Bernalillo, Gabriel Ramos, D-Catron, Grant, Socorro, and senators Linda M. Trujillo, D-Santa Fe, D. Wonda Johnson, McKinley, San Juan.

This bill provides temporary procedures for how the 2020 general election will be conducted. It creates a legislative electoral health and safety task force to authorize emergency actions by the secretary of state under certain conditions.

Among the things it calls for is a polling place located on Indian nation, Tribal or Pueblo land not to be closed or consolidated with other polling locations. Days and times of voting shall not be modified without the written agreement of the Indian nation, tribe or pueblo where the polling location is situated.

The bill passed the senate 40-2. It died in the house on June 20. A motion to reconsider it was adopted and later that day it passed the house 44-26.

Senate President and Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales thanked the legislators for balancing

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the state budget and remaining solvent.

“We met the daunting challenge of an estimated \$2 billion shortfall in our revenues. We created the means to get critical, timely financial help to small businesses and our local governments hit hard by coronavirus-driven events,” Morales said.

“We moved to meet the pressing human rights challenge of this raw moment in time in our society, by laying the foundation to transform outdated law enforcement policies in New Mexico. I am particularly proud of this important work,” he added.

By Beth Blakeman
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