

Summer Magazine 2021

New Mexico Notes by Ruben Baca

This year's regular 60-day session was the worst session that I have been through. No one was allowed in the capitol building. All committee hearings were done by Zoom. If you were lucky enough you had one to two minutes for testimony. It was all virtual so there were no legislators in a committee room. As for lobbying, you could not have a meeting with the legislators, so you had to do it by phone, text, or email.

There were a total of 784 Bills introduced; of that a total of 158 were sent to the Governor where she vetoed 11%. Here is a list of some of the Bills:

SB 255 was the Alcohol Deliveries Bill which was a remake of the Liquor Control Act. This Bill goes into effect July 1, 2021. You cannot sell miniatures after July 1, 2021. In McKinley County, if you sell gasoline, you cannot sell alcohol, only beer and wine. After July 1, you may open on Sundays at 7:00 a.m. and sell until 2:00 a.m., and you can sell on Christmas Day. There must be some rules and regulations written for the restaurants to sell and deliver as well as the retail outlets.

HB 20, Healthy Workplace Act, allows the employee to accumulate one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked and they can use the leave to care for a child, spouse, grandparent. If the employee leaves, he cannot take the accrued sick leave.

There were some bright spots: **HB 268** referenced coronavirus and workers' comp. This bill would have made coronavirus a workman's comp issue if the employer could not prove he had done everything he could to protect the employee. This Bill was not heard in Senate Judiciary. There was not a tobacco tax or a ban on flavored tobacco products. The pre-emption bills were all stalled in committee.

Governor Lujan-Grisham called a special session to hear one bill – to legalize recreational cannabis – which passed and was signed by the Governor and will go into effect December 31, 2025.

New Mexico's population has grown little in the last 10 years, with more people leaving the state than moving in and birth rates down, an LFC review of the latest population figures reports. In Policy Spotlight: State Population Trends, scheduled to be presented to the committee at 11:30 a.m. April 29. Evaluation Unit staff report New Mexico's population growth stagnated over the last decade compared with the nation and neighboring states, growing only 2.8 percent; while the populations in Colorado, Texas, and Arizona grew by 14 percent, and the national population grew by 7.4 percent. Contributing to the slow growth in population: more people moved out of New Mexico than moved in and the birth rate fell by 19 percent, the report says, with the under-18 population shrinking by 8.3 percent. Growth was concentrated in the over 65-age group, which grew 40 percent, and in urban areas and the Permian Basin, areas associated with economic growth, according to the report. The state's non-Hispanic white population declined slightly, and the Hispanic population increased slightly, but the Native American population grew by 10 percent, signaling long-term growth in diversity, the analysis concludes. In the next decade, New Mexico is projected to see overall declines, particularly among younger and rural populations. *"Given the status quo, New Mexico is heading toward having more, older New Mexicans using relatively expensive public services (e.g., Medicaid and Medicare) and fewer, younger New Mexicans in school and working,"* the report says. *"With birth rates continuing to fall, 43 percent of children who disenrolled from public schools during the pandemic moving out of the state, and the number of high school graduates projected to decline 22 percent by 2037, the state should be intentional about right-sizing capacity to address these trends."* Six rounds of stimulus bills from Congress have infused \$18.9 billion in money and services into New Mexico, and the amount will continue to grow, LFC analysis shows. The total includes direct payments to individuals, unemployment benefits, Paycheck Protection Program loans and other business supports, payments to healthcare providers, and Federal Emergency Management Agency support. In addition, Congress has expanded resources in existing federally funded programs and block

grant programs – like food stamps and childcare and community development block grants – and has increased the federal share of the costs of the Medicaid program. The impact of the acts will continue to grow through unemployment benefits, food assistance, and Medicaid, LFC staff conclude in the brief prepared for a hearing scheduled for 8:30 a.m. April 29. With the biggest impact, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed in March 2020, brought \$10.4 billion to the state, mostly through \$7.6 billion in direct payments to individuals and businesses.

Upcoming Events

Good news! Looks like Sandia Resort and Casino will be opening soon, and we will continue with our dates of **August 23-25, 2021** for our Convention and Trade Show. **Please save the date!**