

*The NMPMA Convention and Trade Show* was held **August 21-23, 2017**, at the Sandia Resort and Casino. The convention was well attended and a great success! The convention started with an opening reception for the members, vendors, and suppliers. On August 22nd, there was a golf tournament with an 8:00 shotgun start at the Sandia golf course. This was a great day of golf with a record 114 golfers playing in the tournament. The tournament was won by the team of Mike Digrappa, Dan Moore, Don Kodl, and Donnie Loerwold. Closest to the pin winners were: Hole #3 – Dan Moore, Hole #8 – John Shellhorse, Hole #12 – Alan Franken, and Hole #16 – Bobby Swinford.

After the tournament, prizes were awarded and drawings for gifts were held. Thanks to Andeavor for sponsoring the lunch. The Trade Show started after lunch, followed by dinner with Senator Stuart Ingle, Senate Minority Leader, as our guest speaker, and as I expected he did a very good job. I would like to thank all our sponsors and vendors for supporting the Association; without them, it would not have been as successful as it was.

*New Mexico is still lagging behind* all of our surrounding states when it comes to job creation and employment. There are several factors that the State will have to change if we are going to break the longstanding poverty and unemployment rate in New Mexico. One of the biggest steps the State can make is to overhaul the revenue tax structure. By this, I mean we are largely dependent on gross receipts taxes, where they tax goods and services. I personally believe that the State needs to look at a flat tax, which would encourage businesses to grow, and would attract businesses from the surrounding states. The State needs to encourage more companies to re-locate in New Mexico so we are not so dependent on our extractive industry - “oil and natural gas.”

I will use the largest city in New Mexico as one example of how the GRT tax has not worked. Between 2000 and 2017, Albuquerque’s gross receipts tax rate rose from 5.8125% to 7.5%, a hike of 29%. Let me also say that there are fewer jobs in the city today than there were nine years ago; almost a decade and no net growth in employment. Clearly the policies that promote economic development have got to change.

One bit of good news is that the Mandatory Sick Leave ordinance that was on the city’s local election held in October was defeated by a slim margin of 758 votes.

State Auditor Tim Keller and Albuquerque City Councilor Dan Lewis won the top two spots in Albuquerque’s mayoral race and will now face off in a November runoff. The open election listed all candidates’ names but not their party affiliations. The top two vote getters, regardless of political party, move on to the general election.

With more than half of the city’s voting centers reported, Keller, a Democrat, garnered around 39 percent of the vote on a platform to revamp the city’s police department and tackle Albuquerque’s rising crime rate. His campaign had galvanized the liberal wing of New Mexico’s Democratic Party for promising to address gender-pay disparity in city government and resist calls by President Donald Trump to work with the federal government on immigration enforcement. “*We had a small army helping us,*” Keller told supporters. “*We had a block-by-block campaign, and it showed today.*”

Lewis, a Republican, came in second with about 23% of the vote and also promised to reduce the city’s crime rate while pressing district judges to be harsher on repeat offenders. He was able to hold off former New Mexico Democratic Chair Brian Colon, who came in third, and Bernalillo County Commissioner and fellow Republican Wayne Johnson, who came in fourth. “*I’m the only one who has a detailed plan to fight crime in the city,*” Lewis said. He called Keller’s proposal focusing partly on neighborhood policing “hug-a-thug” and vowed to explain to voters their differences.

The election came after FBI statistics released last week show violent crime in Albuquerque last year jumped around 16 percent. In 2016, the city had a violent crime rate of 1,112 incidents per 100,000

residents. While the rate isn't among the highest in the nation when it comes to cities of similar size and demographics, it is well above average for cities with a population of 250,000 or more. Cities in that category have an average violent crime rate of 711. Albuquerque also has a property crime rate per 100,000 residents of 6,860 — more than twice the average for cities with a population of 250,000 or more.

The race was dominated by rising crime and pressures to revamp the Albuquerque Police Department. This marks the first mayoral election in 20 years without an incumbent on the ballot. Republican Richard Berry has been Albuquerque's mayor since 2009, and isn't seeking a third term.

*"Is she really ahead that much?"* That was the first reaction we heard to a poll that shows Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham blowing away her three challengers for the 2018 Democratic gubernatorial nomination. The survey, done October 12-18 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for the progressive group Majority Institute (getting support from a whopping 75 percent of formerly known as Project New America), has Grisham garnering likely Democratic primary voters

Former TV executive Jeff Apodaca placed second with 10 percent. State Senator Joe Cervantes barely registered with 3 percent. Alcohol prevention educator Peter DeBenedittis received 2 percent. Ten percent of likely voters were undecided. The poll's margin of error was put at 4.6 percent. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner has worked with Grisham, but the poll was not done for any candidate, but for the Institute.

Surely Grisham is far ahead, having the name identification of a congresswoman who has been busy campaigning for a year and raising substantial funds. But is the race closed out as some might infer from this survey? No, the race is not closed out, but it soon could be if one of her rivals does not do, something radical to change the perception of the contest. Before we get to that, here's a skeptical view of the poll from a Dem consultant:

That poll should be taken with a big grain of salt. Hillary was up similarly on Bernie Sanders in the '16 NM primary and we saw how that turned out. (Clinton won by a narrow margin). People want a choice; they don't want an anointment. It's not an easy hill to climb but there's been no paid communications in the contest and no focus on that race yet.

The trouble is that Grisham's two main challengers – Apodaca and Cervantes – may be out of position. The only area where Grisham appears weak is with the left wing of her party where disgruntled but energized Bernie Sanders supporters and economic populists reside. Yet Cervantes, Apodaca and Grisham are pretty much ignoring them. DeBenedittis is running as a progressive and is not, but he's not raising the money he will need to get that message out. Cervantes and Apodaca have long been associated with the moderate wing of the party. Grisham has liberal positions on matters such as abortion but also has centrist instincts.

With no serious challenger to her left and with Dems hungry for a win, she is in good position with a large swath of the party. She can keep playing both liberal and centrist politics. Cervantes and Apodaca are not going to get where they need by deriding Grisham as a professional politician. They are going to have to distinguish themselves in a much more meaningful way. That will mean taking big risks and entertaining the notion of veering left, even if it is against every instinct in their bones.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*The NMPMA Convention and Trade Show* will be held **August 20-22, 2018**, at Sandia Resort and Casino in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

***On behalf of the New Mexico Petroleum Marketers, I want to wish each one of you a very Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year!***