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EDITORIALS

PRC Needs Reform Now

It is admirable that Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez, D-Belen, believes in a careful, deliberate review of proposals to reform the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission. The state Constitution isn't something that should be changed on the fly.

But the proposals to ensure the PRC works for its constituents have been around for a decade. And right now the state Senate is the only entity moving slowly.

The courts have moved quickly, convicting two commissioners in as many years of felonies. The Attorney General's Office has moved quickly, removing one of the recalcitrant felons from office and the public's payroll. And the House has moved quickly, unanimously passing three reform bills through five committees as well as the full membership to establish basic qualifications for commissioners and streamline the agency's responsibilities.

And yet Sanchez — who co-chaired an interim legislative committee in 2002 that made these same basic recommendations on how the PRC could function better — says "I don't think we should ever pass a constitutional amendment without carefully reviewing the contents of the bill." Instead, he favors waiting until the next legislative session to discuss it, which means until 2014 to put the reforms via constitutional amendments to voters.

Almost since its inception, the PRC has been an embarrassment of riches when it comes to inefficiencies, incompetence, scandal, fiscal impropriety and criminal convictions. New Mexicans should not have to foot the bill for two more years of this irresponsibility before problems are even addressed, much less rectified.

As a member of the Senate since 1993, Sanchez knows better than anyone that lasting reforms are often made incrementally. This is the year to at least start repairing the PRC.