

Title: **Lottery chief gets 26% salary hike**
 Author: By Steve Terrell sterrell@sfnewmexican.com
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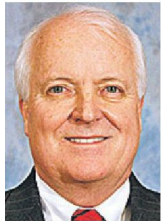


Lottery chief gets 26% salary hike

After years of cuts to college scholarships, CEO to get \$220K; contract includes additional raise in 2020, 'golden parachute'

By Steve Terrell
sterrell@sfnewmexican.com

Although growing demand for college tuition aid forced the Legislature to slash the share covered by each lottery-funded scholarship in recent years



to 60 percent, that financial pinch on students didn't stop the New Mexico Lottery Authority from giving its top executive a hefty pay hike.

The board that oversees the state-sanctioned gambling

operation recently gave CEO David Barden a 26 percent raise to \$220,000 a year.

Barden's new contract also includes an additional 4 percent "salary retention adjustment" that will boost his salary another \$8,800 in July 2020, an unspecified car allowance and a provision mandating Barden would receive \$440,000 if he is terminated "without cause" prior to next July.

The new contract prompted Fred Nathan, executive director of Think New Mexico, a Santa Fe-based think

tank, to issue a news release saying, "Every dollar going to excessive compensation for the Lottery CEO is a dollar less for college scholarships for deserving New Mexico students."

A spokesman for Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Thursday called the pay increase "absurd."

"What's the rationale?" Tripp Stelnicki said when asked about Barden's raise. "Is the lottery doing a 26 percent better job of getting scholarship money to New Mexico students? I think if peo-

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ple find this salary and increase to be inequitable or improper, given the primary goal of the program, they have some justification for feeling that way."

However, there's not much the governor can do about it, Stelnicki said. "It's not the kind of board where they serve at the governor's pleasure and can simply be removed," he said. "They serve five-year terms," he said, pointing to the state law that created the board.

All current members of the board were appointed by former

Gov. Susana Martinez, who left office in December.

"The golden parachute provision in the Lottery CEO's contract is particularly inappropriate as Lottery Authority board members appointed by former Governor Martinez are hand-cuffing future board members who will be appointed by newly elected Governor Lujan Grisham," Nathan said.

Stelnicki expressed frustration about trying to get answers from the Lottery Authority. "I've been trying to get term information from the Lottery Authority all afternoon and can't even get a

human being on the phone over there," he said.

The New Mexican also could not get through the New Mexico Lottery's voicemail system to contact Barden or other officials. Efforts to reach Lottery Authority members also were unsuccessful.

Think New Mexico's news release said that under Barden's previous contract, he could have received a bonus of \$23,509 — half the \$46,000 pay increase he got in the new contract.

The think tank in 2007 successfully spearheaded legislation that requires at least 30 percent of lottery revenues to go to scholarships.

But starting in 2014, Barden began pushing for repeal of that requirement, arguing that more money devoted to promotion and increasing prizes would attract more lottery ticket sales.

"During the past five legislative sessions, Barden has lobbied in tandem with lobbyists for the international gaming vendors that contract with the New Mexico Lottery," Nathan's news release said.

The lottery has provided an average of \$42 million a year for scholarships since the 30 percent guarantee was put in place in 2008, Nathan said.