

Title: **Lottery CEO's fat raise a loser for students**  
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## OUR VIEW

# Lottery CEO's fat raise a loser for students

**B**elow, notice the annual salaries for several top officials of the state of New Mexico.

The governor of the state of New Mexico makes \$110,000.

The chief justice of the Supreme Court makes \$141,814.40.

The attorney general of New Mexico makes \$95,000.

The superintendent of Santa Fe Public Schools recently received a 6 percent raise to just under \$196,000.

All of these public officials are charged with important tasks — whether managing people, policies, lawsuits, educating children or coming to critical judicial conclusions.

Their work affects the lives of adults and children living in New Mexico. What they do matters.

Yet, not a one of these public officials received a 26 percent pay increase this year.

No, that hefty hike in pay was reserved for New Mexico Lottery Authority CEO David Barden. With the 26 percent raise, Barden's salary will reach \$220,000 a year. More than the governor. More than the chief justice of the Supreme Court. More than the AG. You get the picture.

What's more, the lottery boss has in his new contract a 4 percent "salary retention adjustment" designed to raise his pay another \$8,800 in July 2020. He gets an unspecified allowance to operate his car, as well as a provision that mandates he would receive a \$440,000 payout if he is terminated without cause before next July.

All of this, despite the Lottery Authority's stagnant sales — from \$133.6 million in the 2003 budget year to \$134.1 million in the 2018 fiscal year. As a result, there isn't enough money to pay 100 percent of tuition for students who qualify for lottery scholarships anymore.

As Fred Nathan of Think New Mexico puts it: "Every dollar going to excessive compensation for the Lottery CEO is a dollar less for college scholarships for deserving New Mexico students."

He's right, and he's not just spouting off. His group has kept up with all things lottery for years. The nonprofit think tank was successful in persuading the Legislature to approve a 30 percent guarantee of gross sales to scholarships back in 2008. Without that guarantee, it's likely that student scholarships would cover even less.

Why the fat raise? We don't know. Members of the lottery board and executives couldn't be reached last week when reporter Steve Terrell was seeking comment on the raises. Even representatives of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham could not get through. Board chairman Dan Salzwedel did tell the *Albuquerque Journal* that Barden has "done a really good job" and had been receiving a below-market salary.

The lottery board is set up independently and all current board members were appointed by former Gov. Susana Martinez — although we doubt she would have approved of this contract, either. Only as terms expire will Lujan Grisham be able to exert greater influence over the authority. Too bad we have to wait. The governor isn't against paying people well; she did increase salaries of Cabinet secretaries by 17 percent, after all. But she also understands that boosting executive pay should not be a priority for a Lottery Authority that isn't funding 100 percent of tuition for students.

We encourage citizens to let Lottery Authority board members know they are unhappy with this decision. Unfortunately, the list of board members on the website lacks contact information, whether a phone number or email address for appointees. There are no phone numbers or email addresses for staff members, either, except an email for media inquiries. That needs to change.

Absent direct contact, write letters to the editor. Comment on social media. Call your legislator and the Governor's Office. A 26 percent annual raise is unwarranted, given current conditions. Scale it back.