

**2015–2016
Annual Report**

THINK NEW MEXICO

A Results-Oriented Think Tank Serving New Mexicans



**THE FIGHT TO IMPROVE
NEW MEXICO'S INFRASTRUCTURE &
CREATE JOBS**



About the Cover

Our cover photograph was taken in northern New Mexico by Geraint Smith, who was born in a small mining town in Wales and moved to Taos in 1988. Geraint's stunning landscape and wildlife images are showcased at the Geraint Smith Gallery of Photography in Taos. Visit www.geraintsmith.com to see more of his work.

About Think New Mexico

Think New Mexico is a results-oriented think tank whose mission is to improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans, especially those who lack a strong voice in the political process. We fulfill this mission by educating the public, the media, and policymakers about some of the most serious challenges facing New Mexico and by developing and advocating for effective, comprehensive, sustainable solutions to overcome those challenges.

Our approach is to perform and publish sound, nonpartisan, independent research. Unlike many think tanks, Think New Mexico does not subscribe to any particular ideology. Instead, because New Mexico is at or near the bottom of so many national rankings, our focus is on promoting workable solutions.

Think New Mexico began its operations on January 1, 1999. It is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In order to maintain its independence, Think New Mexico does not accept government funding. Contributions from individuals, businesses, and foundations are welcomed, encouraged, and tax-deductible.

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Think New Mexico's Results

As a results-oriented think tank serving New Mexicans, Think New Mexico measures its success based on changes in law or policy we help to achieve and that improve the quality of life in New Mexico.

Our results include:

- Making full-day kindergarten accessible to every child in New Mexico
- Repealing the state's regressive tax on food and successfully defeating efforts to reimpose it
- Developing a Strategic Water Reserve to protect and restore New Mexico's rivers
- Establishing New Mexico's first state-supported Individual Development Accounts to alleviate the state's persistent poverty
- Redirecting millions of dollars a year out of the state lottery's excessive operating costs and into full-tuition college scholarships
- Reforming title insurance to lower closing costs for homebuyers and homeowners who refinance their mortgages
- Winning passage of three constitutional amendments to:
 - increase the qualifications of Public Regulation Commission (PRC) commissioners,
 - transfer insurance regulation from the PRC to a separate department that is insulated from political interference, and
 - consolidate the PRC's corporate reporting unit with the business services division of the Secretary of State's Office
- Modernizing the state's regulation of taxis, limos, shuttles, and moving companies to promote job creation, small business formation, and lower prices for consumers
- Creating a one-stop online portal for all business fees and filings
- Establishing a user-friendly health care transparency website where New Mexicans will soon be able to find the cost and quality of common medical procedures at any hospital in the state.

IMAGE:

*Summer storm over the
Painted Kiva. Photo copyright
Alex Candelaria Sedillos.*

Think New Mexico’s Board of Directors

Consistent with our nonpartisan approach, Think New Mexico’s board is composed of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. They are statesmen and stateswomen who have no agenda other than to see New Mexico succeed. They are also the brain trust of this think tank.

Clara Apodaca, a native of Las Cruces, was First Lady of New Mexico from 1975–1978. She served as New Mexico’s Secretary of Cultural Affairs under Governors Toney Anaya and Garrey Carruthers and as senior advisor to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Clara is the former President and CEO of the National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.



Jacqueline Baca has been President of Bueno Foods since 1986. She helps teach a class about family businesses at the University of New Mexico, where she received her MBA. Jackie was a founding board member of Accion and has served on the boards of the Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce, the New Mexico Family Business Alliance, and WESST.



Paul Bardacke served as Attorney General of New Mexico from 1983–1986. Paul is a Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers, and he currently handles complex commercial litigation and mediation with the firm of Bardacke Allison in Santa Fe. In 2009, Paul was appointed by U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to serve on the National Park System Advisory Board.



David Buchholtz has advised more than a dozen Governors and Cabinet Secretaries of Economic Development on fiscal matters. He has served as Chairman of the Association of Commerce and Industry and was appointed to the Spaceport Authority Board of Directors by Governor Martinez. David is Of Counsel to the Rodey law firm.



Garrey Carruthers, *Chair Emeritus*, served as Governor of New Mexico from 1987–1990 and in 2013 became President of New Mexico State University, where he had previously served as Dean of the College of Business. Garrey was formerly President and CEO of Cimarron Health Plan and he serves on the board of the Arrowhead economic development center in Las Cruces.





LaDonna Harris is Chair of the Board and Founder of Americans for Indian Opportunity. She is also a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus. LaDonna was a leader in the effort to return the Taos Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo. She is an enrolled member of the Comanche Nation.



Edward Lujan is the former CEO of Manuel Lujan Agencies, the largest privately owned insurance agency in New Mexico. Ed is also a former Chairman of the Republican Party of New Mexico, the New Mexico Economic Development Commission, and the National Hispanic Cultural Center of New Mexico, where he is now Chair Emeritus.



Liddie Martinez is a native of Española whose family has lived in northern New Mexico since the 1600s. She is Executive Director of the Española-based Regional Development Corporation and also farms the Rancho Faisan. Liddie formerly served as board chair of the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation.



Brian Moore is a small businessman from Clayton, where he and his wife Linda own Clayton Ranch Market. Brian was a member of the New Mexico House of Representatives from 2001–2008, where he served on the Legislative Finance Committee. From 2010–2012, Brian worked as Deputy Chief of Staff and Washington, D.C. Director for Governor Martinez.



Fred Nathan founded Think New Mexico and is its Executive Director. Fred served as Special Counsel to then-New Mexico Attorney General Tom Udall from 1991–1998. In that capacity, he was the architect of several successful legislative initiatives and was in charge of New Mexico's lawsuit against the tobacco industry, which resulted in a \$1.25 billion settlement for the state.



Roberta Cooper Ramo is the first woman elected President of the American Bar Association and the American Law Institute. Roberta has served on the State Board of Finance and was President of the University of New Mexico Board of Regents. In 2011, she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Roberta is a shareholder in the Modrall law firm.

Dear New Mexican:

Since 1999, when Think New Mexico was founded, our board has always applied a consistent formula for choosing potential topics to work on: the policy reform needs to be big enough to make a positive difference in the lives of most New Mexicans, yet small enough to be politically achievable.

That successful recipe helped bring about all of the advances listed on the first page of this report. However, the board decided to depart from this formula when we chose to address New Mexico’s broken, hyper-political, and opaque system for spending taxpayer dollars on public infrastructure projects.

This topic met the first part of our test because New Mexico urgently needs to repair its crumbling roads and failing water systems, but there is some question as to whether it meets the second test. Many political experts believe that it would be like removing the proverbial punch bowl from the party if we replace pork barrel spending with a system of planning and prioritization of infrastructure spending.

We don’t disagree, but a merit-based system like the one we are proposing would push urgently needed projects to the front of the line and also produce thousands of jobs at a time when New Mexico is near the top of the nation for unemployment and near the bottom for job growth.

Although we were not successful during the past legislative session, we did manage to build a strong foundation on which to try again. Next year we will start with a strong bipartisan coalition of major business and labor supporters (see page 6).

If we are successful in next year’s session, we will hopefully create momentum to address some of the other seemingly intractable challenges facing New Mexico, such as the condition of our schools and economy.

You can help by joining the more than 1,000 social investors from 115 communities (listed on pages 20–32) who believe in what we do. So please consider sending in a contribution in the enclosed yellow envelope or visiting www.thinknewmexico.org to learn about other ways you can become involved.

**Think New Mexico’s
STAFF**



Kristina G. Fisher
Associate Director



Jennifer Halbert
Business Manager



Fred Nathan
Executive Director



Othiamba Umi
Field Director

Fred Nathan

Fred Nathan

June 30, 2016

In 2015, Think New Mexico launched a new initiative to fix the state's broken system for funding infrastructure like roads, bridges, and water systems. New Mexico is the only state that uses a political formula to divide up this funding (about \$300 million a year), allowing each lawmaker to spend a portion of the money in their sole discretion. Because there is no prioritization or planning, many projects are not shovel-ready or are severely underfunded, so the dollars appropriated to those projects sit idle. Over \$1 billion is currently sitting on the sidelines—enough to create 27,000 jobs in a state that ranks near the top of nation for unemployment and near the bottom for job growth. Think New Mexico drafted and championed bipartisan legislation to establish a transparent, merit-based process for funding public infrastructure. Our bill was endorsed by just about every major business and labor organization, but it unfortunately proved too heavy a lift to pass in a 30-day session.



Think NM proposal sorely needed

Tom McDonald

It should be no surprise to any of my regular readers that I'm a big fan of Think New Mexico.

It's important to our state to have a nonpartisan think tank researching quality-of-life issues and pushing for changes, especially in the Legislature, that benefit all New Mexicans instead of a self-interested few.

Plus, it has a track record for actually getting things done, which is a much better alternative to the noise that typically comes out of partisan rhetoric.

That said, I'm glad to read about Think NM's latest crusade, taking on an antiquated and too-political capital outlay process that's long been overdue for an overhaul. It's an ambitious undertaking, but the time may indeed be right for this kind of good-government reform.

The issue is the way in which the "Christmas Tree Bill" — called that by lawmakers because of the gifts doled out to their districts at the end of each session — gets systematically approved. Through a process created in 1977, it works like this:

Each year, municipalities, counties and other governmental entities around the

state present to their lawmakers their wish list of infrastructure improvements, with the hope of getting their projects funded in full or in part. Our senators and representatives then take these requests into the upcoming session and submit their district's capital requests.

Then, behind closed doors, a capital spending bill is created and "prioritized" projects around the state get funding with the bill's passage. The bills fund an average of 1,500 projects with about \$300 million in taxpayer money, according to Think New Mexico.

There are a number of problems inherent to this way of funding capital projects such as road and bridge work, dam repairs, water system improvements and more.

It's based more on politics than actual need. Money is wasted as unnecessary capital requests rise above more urgent needs. And it's politically divisive — Think NM says that capital outlay bills have failed to pass six times in the past two decades because of feuding between Democrats and Republicans.

Even Pete Campos, a state senator since 1991 who's known for his ability to bring the bacon home to his north-

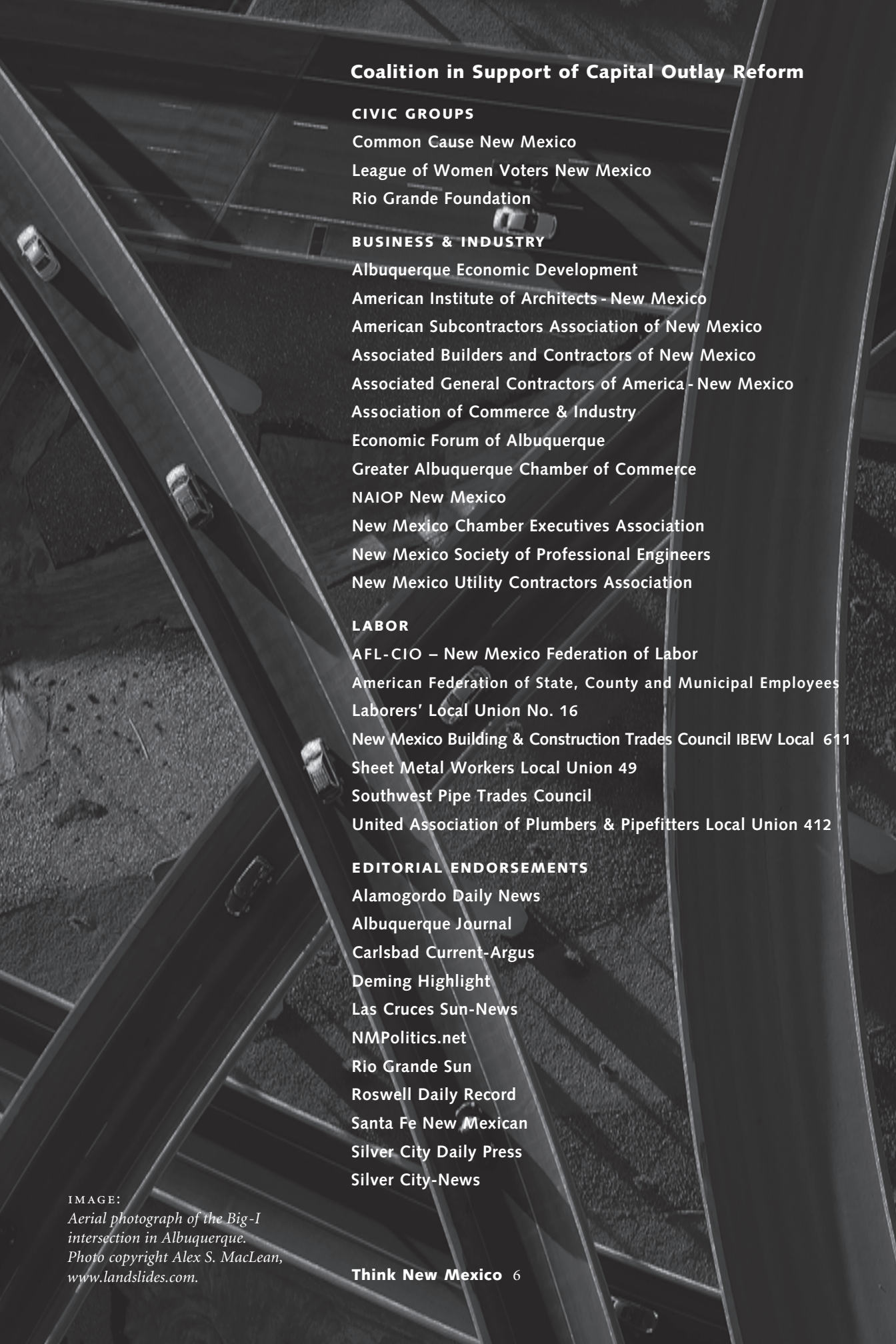
ern New Mexico district, calls the system "archaic, parochial and highly political."

Campos was actually the first lawmaker to call my attention to the flawed approach to capital funding. The fact that he's been pushing reforms — when his district has repeatedly benefited from his prowess in the process — suggests that this may indeed be the opportune time to change the process.

In highlighting the problem for the 2016 legislative session, Think NM is proposing legislation to create a transparent, merit-based system for infrastructure expenditures using the model for funding the state's capital projects for schools, a process that includes an independent body that prioritizes project requests according to need.

Think New Mexico's recommendation is to create a "capital outlay planning board" that's made up of qualified appointees from the legislative and executive branches — not elected officials. The board would prioritize projects according to a set of specified criteria and its top projects would then go the Legislature for funding.

It makes sense, and it's sorely needed.



Coalition in Support of Capital Outlay Reform

CIVIC GROUPS

Common Cause New Mexico
League of Women Voters New Mexico
Rio Grande Foundation

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Albuquerque Economic Development
American Institute of Architects - New Mexico
American Subcontractors Association of New Mexico
Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico
Associated General Contractors of America - New Mexico
Association of Commerce & Industry
Economic Forum of Albuquerque
Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce
NAIOP New Mexico
New Mexico Chamber Executives Association
New Mexico Society of Professional Engineers
New Mexico Utility Contractors Association

LABOR

AFL-CIO – New Mexico Federation of Labor
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Laborers' Local Union No. 16
New Mexico Building & Construction Trades Council IBEW Local 611
Sheet Metal Workers Local Union 49
Southwest Pipe Trades Council
United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 412

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Alamogordo Daily News
Albuquerque Journal
Carlsbad Current-Argus
Deming Highlight
Las Cruces Sun-News
NMPolitics.net
Rio Grande Sun
Roswell Daily Record
Santa Fe New Mexican
Silver City Daily Press
Silver City-News

IMAGE:

*Aerial photograph of the Big-I
intersection in Albuquerque.
Photo copyright Alex S. MacLean,
www.landslides.com.*

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Capital outlay reform can happen

New Mexico legislators should not squander the opportunity to reform how the state allocates money for capital projects.

To make reform a reality, legislators must display the courage and good sense to push legislation through in the remaining days of the session.

House Bill 307, a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Zachary Cook, a Republican, and Sen. Carlos Cisneros, a Democrat, takes apart the current system of how the state allocates money for capital projects and puts it back together again. The result is a system that is fairer, more transparent and less open to political trickery.

This matters because dollars are scarce. Spending infrastructure dollars wisely means the state deals with critical problems first, rather than paying off political favors. Spending dollars wisely, rather than letting them sit unused in the bank means direct infusions of cash in local economies. Spending these dollars wisely, especially in hard times, means jobs when job creation is sluggish.

A New Mexico In Depth analysis showed that "lawmakers appropriated more than \$1.1 billion for more than 2,800 capital outlay projects from 2010 through 2014. But less than half the money has been spent." That's hardly doing the economy any good, not to mention the work that remains to be done. These funds do such things as repair dams, fix roads, renovate buildings or repair waterways.

Instead, what has been happening for decades is that New Mexico squanders the opportunity to make capital dollars work. We are the only state in the country that spends these important funds in such a haphazard manner. Elected officials take the public infrastructure budget and divide it up — using a political formula, with each of the 70 House, 42 Senate members and the governor getting a bit of the bigger pot of money to spread around. You can be sure that as the projects are identified, lobbyists are whispering on behalf of their bosses, influencing how critical dollars are spent.

Rather than a list of projects being put together in secrecy (the 2015 capital outlay bill wasn't even posted on the Legislature's website until after the special session passing it ended), a council of experts would be appointed by the Legislature and the governor. These people — architects, engineers, builders and the like — would rank projects submitted by state agencies and local governments. They would use a list of objective criteria, including whether the project is ready to begin, to develop a list of how the money will be spent. The Legislature would approve the final plan.

Time may be running out, but HB 307 had its first committee hearing Monday and could be on its way with a vote Wednesday in the House Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee. Then, another committee and a House vote and it's on to the Senate.

For this important reform to pass, legislators must not be afraid to give up power. We were disappointed to hear the usually common-sense Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto, D-Albuquerque, tell *New Mexican* reporter Steve Terrell that the reform is being "imposed from the outside."

The Legislature has had decades to improve the process and has failed to do so. Reform is being pushed by the nonpartisan Think New Mexico group (which also helped "impose" full-day kindergarten, a restructured Public Regulation Commission and removal of the gross receipts tax on food). Surely, legislators aren't so enamored of their own power that they can't take a good idea — whatever its source — and run with it.

All along, we have said this 30-day session should focus on improving New Mexico's economy. This bill, endorsed by both unions and pro-business groups, would do just that. Time is short, but legislators must make sure the clock does not run out on this necessary reform.

NM Legislature

2016 capital outlay bill continues past patterns of partially funded projects

SANDRA FISH
NEW MEXICO IN DEPTH

Capital outlay appropriations are a little bit like that Rolling Stones song — you can't always get what you want.

Sometimes, you might get what you

need.

In most instances, you get way less than what you requested.

Take, for instance five lawmakers who sought \$40 million to build a Lea County judicial complex. Only \$60,000 is included in House Bill 219.

Seven Albuquerque area legislators asked for \$13.2 million for an aquatics park. They ended up including only \$100,000.

New Mexico In Depth analyzed the

800 projects in HB 219, with 777 funded by severance tax bonds. Of those, 749 have at least one legislative sponsor — all but 132 have more than one sponsor.

NMID also examined nearly 1,300 mostly local projects totaling more than \$1 billion proposed by the 112 lawmakers.

In the \$166 million House bill, \$123 million comes from severance tax bonds. Of that, lawmakers could divide \$82 million among themselves. So each of 42 senators allocated about \$976,000 to infrastructure projects they selected. And each of the 70 House members got \$586,000 for their favored projects.

Paring more than \$1 billion in requests to \$82 million clearly requires lawmakers to make choices. But they don't share their own individual choices with the public.

Getting more or less

NMID's analysis does identify original sponsors of projects. And we can compare actual project funding in the bill versus requested funding.

Only 61 projects are over-funded — by about \$14 million. Another 181 are funded at the level

originally requested.

And 512 are under-funded to the tune of \$245 million.

"The majority of the projects don't appear to be fully funded based on the requests," said Fred Nathan, executive director of Think New Mexico. "That's a prescription for dollars sitting idle in a state that's No. 1 in unemployment and 50th in job growth, which is tragic."

A request for \$105,000 for band instruments and equipment for Robertson High School in Las Vegas is only \$5,000 in the final bill. Last year, Gov. Susana Martinez vetoed all references to musical instruments in the capital outlay bill.

One project that is fully funded at the \$20,000 level is the Clovis Zoo animals and infrastructure, sponsored by Rep. Randal S. Crowder, R-Clovis, and Sen. Linda Lopez, D-Albuquerque.

Then there are the few projects that get more money than originally suggested.

For instance, 32 Albuquerque lawmakers requested a total of \$15,000 for security cameras for city parks. That project is funded for \$401,000.

And an Albuquerque

gun violence memorial sponsored by House Majority Leader Nate Gentry, R-Albuquerque, is funded at \$229,000. Gentry's bill calls for \$100,000 for the memorial.

Bernalillo County, the center of the state's population, gets the bulk of the money divvied up by lawmakers.

Sen. Carlos Cisneros, D-Quetta, sponsored HB 219 in the Senate.

"It's a common dilemma, needless to say," Cisneros said. "We as legislators, as well as the executive, continue to add more projects without requiring shovel-readiness and start-to-finish completions."

Reform prospects

"There's lots of things that are nice to have, but are not public infrastructure, do not create jobs, and many of these projects will be worn out before the bonds are paid off," Think New Mexico's Nathan said.

A House committee defeated a bill Cisneros sponsored to reform the capital outlay process, creating a commission to review and recommend projects to the Legislature. With at least \$1 billion allocated for infra-

structure projects going unspent, Cisneros said the system needs change.

"We're back to adding more projects to a list that just keeps getting larger and larger."

Think New Mexico advocated the change, with support from business and labor organizations. Nathan said the group will be back with reform efforts based on feedback from lawmakers this year.

"We recognize that we didn't find common ground this year, but we got some helpful advice as to how we can get a bill that can pass and work," he said.

House Ways and Means Chairman Jason Harper, the primary sponsor of HB 219, said reforming the process will be one of his top priorities this summer. He wants to cut red tape in the process, and consolidate the application process for local governments.

"The Think New Mexico proposal was a great start," he said. "This is a statewide, enormous problem. This process is broken. I'm hoping over the interim we'll have a bill that's ready for prime time."

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THE VOICE OF THE PECOS VALLEY

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Wednesday

Good-government issue will resurface next session

One of the many bills to fall by the wayside in the just-past legislative session was House Bill 307, which would have reformed the way New Mexico funds its public works projects.

It was a good-government proposal that would have served the public interest better than what's in place now. It would have replaced politics with a smarter approach to spending taxpayer money and taking care of the state's infrastructure.

It's a shame this bill didn't even get out of committee, but it'll be back next year — probably with an even better chance at passage.

It all started with Think New Mexico's report last year on the problems inherent with the state's approach to capital spending.

Since 1977, lawmakers have gotten together and passed an annual "Christmas Tree Bill" — so called because there's something in it for every lawmaker's district. Or they don't pass it; over the past two decades, capital outlay bills have failed six times because of partisan fighting. The current process is as politically tainted as they come.

HB 307 would have changed that by pulling at least some of the politics out of the process. As it is now, toward the end of each session, lawmakers huddle up behind closed doors and decide which capital requests to fund, and how much.

The process is secretive and skewed in favor of the more entrenched and powerful lawmakers. The actual relevance of the project proposals takes a backseat to lawmakers who are

the most adept at bringing home the bacon.

That may be good politics, but it's not good government. If you want your tax dollars spent according to need rather than political pull, the process needs to be changed.

HB 307 would have reduced the political influences and created a more systematic, need-based approach to capital funding.

Specifically, the bill would have created a "capital project planning council" and a "capital planning and assistance division" that would prioritize projects and prepare a statewide capital improvements plan with annual updates.

The bill would also have created a "capital outlay oversight committee" for lawmakers. In short, a council of qualified professionals would select the individual projects while lawmakers would vote on the overall appropriation.

Clearly this wouldn't remove all politics from the process, but that would be impossible anyway. The legislature has the power of appropriation and the governor the power of the veto pen.

But it does lessen the impact of politics by shifting the priority setting to a far less politicized group of people, who would in turn judge the projects on their actual merit.

So why did this good-government proposal fall in committee? According to reports, when it came up in the House Government, Election and Indian Affairs Committee, lawmakers from rural areas objected. There were

concerns that their pet projects would get the short end of the stick and they'd lose out on funding.

Perhaps those lawmakers were right. If their projects weren't worth the money being spent on them, the cards would be stacked against them.

As is so often the case, it takes a while to pass good-government legislation, and this was only the first push for Think New Mexico's proposal. Executive Director Fred Nathan is already looking to the next session — as well he should, since the groundwork has been laid, the proposal gathered a lot of support and, next time, there will be more time to work it through the legislature.

"This was a humbling process for us," Nathan said in an email to me last week, "but we received excellent feedback and we are encouraged that HB 307 was the only bill this session that had the backing of both major labor and business organizations, which lays a solid foundation for next year.

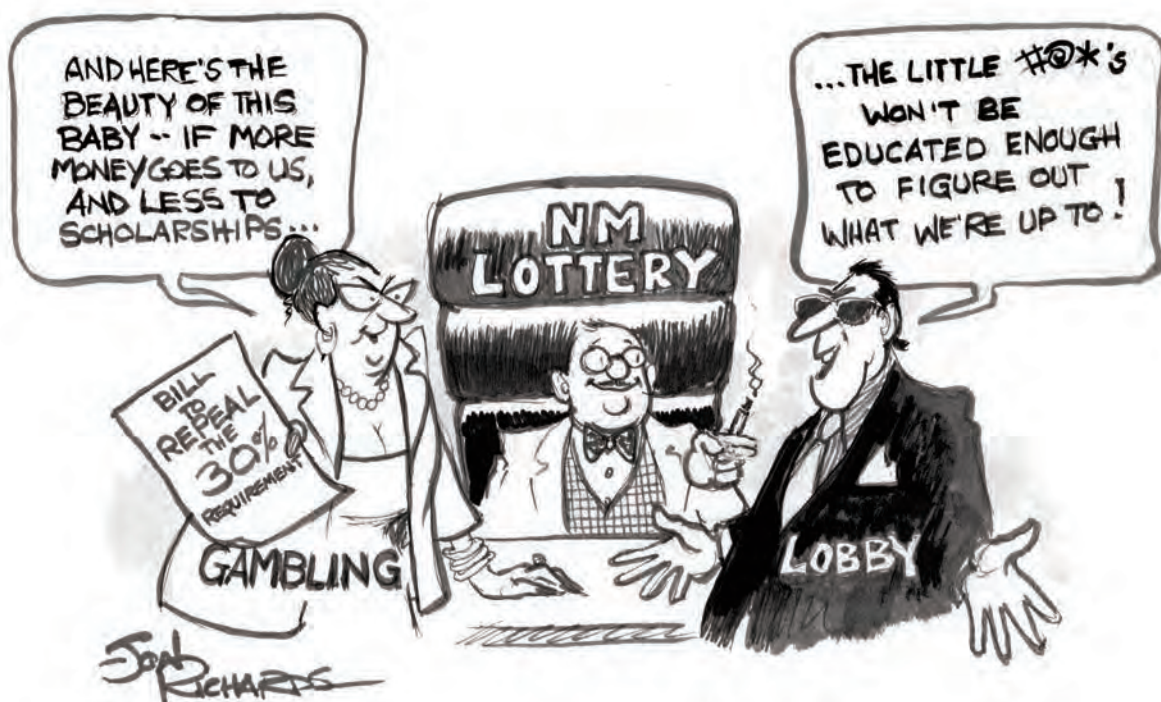
"We will continue to emphasize how many well-paying construction jobs these reforms would create, particularly in the rural parts of the state where the need for public infrastructure projects is greatest."

Obviously, he's already trying to get the rural support he needs to pass it next year. That's good, because New Mexico could really use some good government these days.

Tom McDonald is editor of the New Mexico Community News Exchange.

FIGHT TO PROTECT LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS CONTINUES

This year Think New Mexico also continued its ongoing effort to ensure that the state lottery fulfills its statutory purpose of maximizing dollars for scholarships. This work began back in 2007, when we discovered that only about 23 cents of every dollar bet on the lottery were reaching the scholarship fund. So Think New Mexico won passage of a bill requiring the lottery to deliver a minimum of 30% of revenues to scholarships, which has resulted in an additional \$9 million a year going to the scholarship fund. These dollars came largely at the expense of the three multinational gaming companies that contract with the lottery. For example, the lottery's largest contract was re-bid after our reform law took effect, and the percentage of revenues going to the outside company fell from 8.5% to 1.5%. These gaming companies hired teams of well-connected lobbyists to push to repeal the 30% requirement so they could increase their share of lottery revenue. Think New Mexico fought to protect the scholarships by defeating the bill. Ultimately it was stopped in the House Ways and Means Committee on a bipartisan 8-5 vote.



"Thanks for more good work this session. Although I sent the emails opposing the lottery scholarship changes, I felt that the bill was sure to pass when I sent my last email. I was truly shocked to see that we got it blocked, but it showed me again what an impact we can have as a group." LARRY PRESCOTT, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO



Once again during the 2016 session, the powerful chair of the Senate Finance Committee introduced a bill to reimpose the food tax. Think New Mexico led the fight to repeal this regressive tax back in 2004 and we successfully defeated efforts to bring it back in 2010, 2013, and 2015. When this year's food tax bill was introduced, we asked: are we so lacking in new ideas to grow our economy that we are going to go back and tax fruits, vegetables, and baby food, like Mississippi and Alabama?

Although we prevailed again this year, we expect that legislation to reimpose the food tax will likely return in the future, in part because the public does not have hired lobbyists. Meanwhile, special interest loopholes in the tax code will be conveniently ignored because they have powerful lobbyists protecting them.

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2016 | THE SUNDAY JOURNAL

Budget expert proposes reinstating tax on food

BY DEBORAH BAKER
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — State Sen. John Arthur Smith doesn't put his messages in bottles. He puts them in tax bills.

The Senate's budget expert and chairman of its Finance Committee, Smith has peppered the legislative landscape this year with tax increase proposals that he knows probably won't survive the 30-day session.

The Deming Democrat's various bills would tax art shipped out of state, raise taxes on gasoline and delay a pending decrease in the corporate income tax rate.

And last week he introduced a bill that would put the gross receipts tax back on food.

Smith is influential, and Senate Bill 281 prompted alarm and immediate pushback from advocates for children and the poor.

New Mexico Voices for Children said that, while New Mexico needs new revenue to adequately fund programs and services, a gross receipts tax on food would be "the worst possible way" to do obtain the money.

Many families already struggle to put food on the table, said Executive Director Veronica Garcia.

"New Mexico has the highest rate of child poverty in the nation, the highest unemployment rate and the third-highest child food insecurity rate," Garcia said in a statement. "Why would we do anything that could make child poverty and hunger worse?"

The Center for Civic Policy said it commissioned a poll of registered voters in December that showed 80 percent of respondents opposed a food tax.

The New Mexico Chamber Executives Association — from chambers of commerce around the state — also opposes reinstating the food tax.

Think New Mexico, the independent think tank that pushed for the original legislation exempting most grocery items — which passed in 2004 — has fought its reimposition several times over the years.

"Reimposing the tax on food would burden working families and harm local businesses, since every dollar families spend on the tax is a dollar less for them to spend on other goods and services," Executive Director Fred Nathan said Saturday.

Also dampening the chances in this election-year session, which ends Feb. 18: Republican Gov. Susana Martinez remains opposed to tax hikes.

Lawmakers who are writing a budget for the fiscal year that

begins July 1 have watched oil and gas prices plummet in the past few months, along with the state's projected revenues.

They're currently counting on \$30 million in "new" money to spend next year, although Smith worries that, too, could dry up.

Having a food tax — which he estimates could raise about \$150 million annually — and other tax bills in the wings could provide a backstop of "now money," he said Saturday.

"In the event revenues are heading south, you throw it out there to be in the mix," he told the **Journal**.

But he's sending bigger messages as well, he said.

"My message is that we need a more reliable, predictable revenue stream. ... Our revenue streams are highly volatile."

And, he said, "Our entire tax scheme needs to be revamped."

Targeting tax cuts to companies to stay or relocate here doesn't seem to be working, he said.

IMPLEMENTING HEALTH CARE TRANSPARENCY

In 2014, Think New Mexico launched an initiative designed to make health care more affordable by creating a public website where New Mexicans can find the prices and quality of common medical procedures at any hospital in the state. Our bipartisan bill passed the Senate and House unanimously and was signed into law by the Governor on April 9, 2015. Since then, Think New Mexico has remained involved in the implementation of the new law, working to ensure that the website will be as user-friendly as possible for everyday New Mexicans. Think New Mexico's Associate Director Kristina Fisher is serving on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee that will work with the Department of Health to get the website online.



Panel law intended consumer input

BY DAN BOYD
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — Backers of a new law that calls for hospital prices and quality data to be made publicly available online by the start of 2018 are criticizing the state Department of Health for not stipulating that consumers be included on an advisory panel that will oversee the law's implementation.

Sen. Sander Rue, R-Albuquerque, one of the sponsors of the bipartisan bill that passed the Legislature without opposition during this year's 60-day session, said the agency's proposed regulations for the advisory committee "violate the intent" of the law's architects.

"We passed this law to help patients," Rue said in a letter to the **Journal**. "It is wrong that they are being relegated to second-class, optional members of the advisory committee that is supposed to speak for their interests."

As drafted, the Department of Health's regulations call

for the advisory panel to have 7 to 13 members, all of whom would be appointed by the agency's Cabinet secretary. Hospital executives or health-care professionals would have to be represented on the panel, but it would be up to the secretary of health to decide whether to also appoint consumers or consumer advocates.

A public hearing on the proposed regulations was held Tuesday in Santa Fe, and fewer than a dozen people spoke — all in opposition.

A Health Department spokesman insisted Tuesday that the agency recognizes the importance of having consumers included in the health care transparency law's implementation.

"We want to be clear that the department's intent is to allow flexibility of advisory committee membership," agency spokesman Kenny Vigil said. "After all, this law is designed to benefit New Mexicans, and having consumers' voices

included is a key part of the process."

Hospitals and other health-care facilities were already required to report certain patient data to the state before the bill was signed into law, but the Department of Health had previously not been allowed to release the information in a way that identified specific hospitals.

Fred Nathan and Kristina Fisher, the two top staffers of the Santa Fe-based Think New Mexico, a think tank that pushed for the New Mexico bill, said the group is concerned the advisory panel might not feel inclined to make hospital pricing information easily accessible to New Mexicans if its membership consists solely of hospital executive and other health-care providers.

Supporters of the new law also say having consumers on the advisory panel would help ensure the information on the website is presented in an easily understandable format.

ADVOCATING FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

Meanwhile, back in 2008, Think New Mexico published a report detailing the strong evidence in support of smaller schools as a strategy to improve student achievement and graduation rates. In that report, we highlighted Velarde Elementary as an example of a small school that has been nationally recognized for its outstanding performance even as it serves an overwhelmingly low-income population of students. So when the Española School Board proposed to shutter this high-performing small school, we helped the community make the case to keep it open. Reason prevailed and the board ultimately opted to keep the school open.



More Costly to Close Velarde

By Fred Nathan

The three school board members and central office administrators pushing to close Velarde Elementary School claim that closing the nationally recognized school will save approximately \$225,000 (less than one half of one percent of a projected district budget of more than \$47,950,000). They argue that it will help them close their \$1.9 million budget deficit next year.

In fact, as explained below, it will cost Española School District and taxpayers more to close Velarde Elementary than to keep it open. That will make the district's budget deficit worse, not better.

The savings figure has been something of a moving target. The district's central administrative office has stated at various times during the last three months that the savings would be \$198,000, or \$250,000, or \$332,000. The most recent savings figure was \$225,000, provided at last week's school board meeting.

In calculating that figure, central office administrators and school board members overlooked an important fact: the District receives more than \$196,000 annually from the state's small schools funding adjustment for Velarde Elementary School. If the district closes the school, that funding disappears too.

In addition, the scheme to consolidate the Velarde Elementary students into Alcalde Elementary means that Alcalde Elementary will lose its small schools funding adjustment of more than \$114,000 because the additional students it will receive from Velarde Elementary will put it 42 students over the limit to be eligible to receive funding. The scheme also puts Alcalde Elementary over its capacity, which would likely lead to new renovation expenses.

There are other obvious additional new expenses that were left out of the calculations for closing Velarde Elementary. For example, if the district closes Velarde Elementary, the district and taxpayers will incur annual recurring expenses for maintaining the school building until the district can find a buyer or lessor, which will likely take many years. These new expenses include insurance, heating the building in the winter so the pipes don't burst, and providing security to prevent the vacant building from being vandalized.

The school board and central office administrators have also omitted from their calculations the unnecessary legal expense that they are incurring daily by suing the state Public Education Department, which has twice rejected their request to close Velarde Elementary. These rejections occurred because the board did not vote to close the school in a

properly noticed public meeting and because the public was not given the opportunity to comment on the proposed closure. For a district that is currently running nearly \$2 million in the red, is it prudent to spend tens of thousands of dollars that they don't have on lawyers to bring a meritless lawsuit?

The human costs are even more concerning than the financial ones. Before deciding to close Velarde Elementary, the board should have considered how it would affect students in the classrooms, since student achievement is the true bottom line for schools.

Here the school board and interim Superintendent Bobbie Gutierrez should take a careful look at the decision by then Santa Fe Public Schools Superintendent Bobbie Gutierrez to close three small elementary schools in Santa Fe serving a population of low-income children (77 percent eligible for free and reduced cost lunch) and consolidate them all into a single school in 2010. As with Velarde Elementary, powerless students and parents were uniformly opposed to closure and the superintendent and board's decision to close the schools was justified by fuzzy math as a way to close a budget deficit, but ultimately ended up costing taxpayers more than simply allowing the schools to remain open.

In Santa Fe the academic performance of children whose schools were closed has suffered. For example, the percentage of students proficient in reading in the fifth grade at the three schools that were closed ranged from 52.4 to 70 percent in the year before they were closed. In the subsequent four years reading proficiency for the fifth grade for the consolidated school has ranged between 30 and 41.5 percent, a substantial decline.

This would be a good time for the District and its interim superintendent to pause and reconsider whether it makes sense to close Velarde Elementary, especially when it will make the district deficit larger, not smaller. Consider whether Velarde Elementary could also be used to provide pre-kindergarten for the communities of Alcalde, Dixon and Velarde. And consider whether the savings needed to close the district's deficit would be better found in cuts at the central administrative offices (e.g., the \$50,000 for public relation services by 2 Smooth Advertising, which is owned by Rio Arriba County Commissioner Barney Trujillo) than in the classrooms of Velarde Elementary.

It is time to put the academic needs of students ahead of politics and keep Velarde Elementary open.

Fred Nathan is Executive Director of Think New Mexico, an independent, results-oriented think tank serving New Mexicans. To learn more, please go to: www.thinknewmexico.org

Board Profile: Brian Moore

When Brian Moore was elected to the New Mexico Legislature in 2000, he found himself representing a larger geographic territory than any of his legislative colleagues. His district covered 15,000 square miles and included six counties, thirteen municipalities and eight schools districts stretched across the northeastern plains of New Mexico around his hometown of Clayton.

Fortunately, Brian came into the job with a skill for working well with lawmakers of both parties to get things done for his extensive district.

Over the next eight years, he helped shape the state's economic policy as a member of the Legislative Finance Committee, and he also served on the Education Funding Formula task force and the Agriculture and Water Committee.

In 2005, Brian co-sponsored Think New Mexico's successful legislation to create a Strategic Water Reserve, and Think New Mexico's staff had a front-seat view of his deft dealings with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, as well as stakeholders ranging from municipalities to business groups to agricultural interests to environmentalists.

"As a legislator, it was clear to me that the only way to get anything done is to work with people from both sides," says Brian. "Think New Mexico exemplifies how a collaborative, nonpartisan approach can improve the lives of New Mexicans."

After four terms in the New Mexico House, Brian imposed term limits on himself and returned to Clayton.

In 2009, he ran for Lieutenant Governor. Although he ultimately lost that race, when Governor Martinez was elected she brought him on board as Director of Policy Planning for her transition committee. He went on to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff and then as Washington D.C. Director for Governor Martinez from 2010 – 2012.

Today, Brian continues his involvement in public policy by assisting the New Mexico Association of Counties with their government relations.

Brian and his wife Linda have owned and operated Clayton Ranch Market since 1995. They have five children and seven grandchildren.



Board Profile: Jackie Baca



Chances are high that you have tasted chile, posole, tortillas, salsa or other delicious New Mexican foods produced by Jackie Baca and her family-owned business, Bueno Foods. Jackie began her career there working on the tamale production line at age 16, and she has been president of the company for the past three decades.

Bueno Foods got its start 65 years ago, when brothers Joe, Ray and August Baca opened a small neighborhood grocery store called Ace Food Store. They went on to pioneer innovative processes for roasting, packing and freezing green and red chile on a commercial scale, helping bring New Mexican food traditions to a national audience.

Today, Jackie runs Bueno Foods with her siblings Ana, Gene, and Catherine Baca. They remain committed to purchasing only chile grown in New Mexico, and they also work with the New Mexico Chile Association to protect the cultural heritage of our state's signature agricultural crop.

Jackie has consistently focused not only on the quality of the food Bueno produces, but also on the transformative potential of the jobs the company creates. Under Jackie's leadership, the company's sales have increased ten-fold and its employment has grown five-fold to 285 workers (and over 350 during the peak chile processing season).

In addition to her work at Bueno Foods, Jackie has helped many other local businesses get started. She was a founding board member of Accion, which provides small loans and financial education to entrepreneurs, and she served on the board of WESST, a statewide small business development and training organization. Jackie has also served on the boards of the Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce and the New Mexico Family Business Alliance.

One of Jackie's favorite activities is serving as a guest lecturer on family business planning, development, and management at various universities, including UNM, where she received her MBA.

"Many of the New Mexico's most serious challenges can be addressed by generating good jobs, so I am pleased to be a part of Think New Mexico's efforts to enhance economic development through thoughtful public policy reforms," says Jackie.

Our thanks to the generous sponsors who make the paid Leadership Internship program possible, including Rob Coffland, Steven J. Dayton and the Michael and Alice Kuhn Foundation. Please contact us if you are interested in information about sponsoring a Leadership Intern.

To learn more about Think New Mexico's Leadership Internship, read bios of past interns, or find out how to apply, please visit: www.thinknewmexico.org

Right: 2015 Think New Mexico Leadership Interns meet with Governor Susana Martinez (L-R): Julia Downs, Governor Martinez, Seth Barany & Naftali Burakovsky.

2016 LEADERSHIP INTERNS

Each year, Think New Mexico offers paid Leadership Internships with the goal of retaining a new generation of potential leaders in New Mexico and teaching them how they can make a difference here in their home state. This year's interns are:



- **Prasamsa Dhakal** is earning her MBA from New Mexico State University and working in the school's technology commercialization office helping turn student ideas into start-ups. She hopes to pursue a career in New Mexico state government.
- **Marcos Duran** grew up in Hatch, New Mexico, where his grandparents were farmworkers, and he is now a graduate student earning his Masters in Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin, where he edits a public policy blog.
- **Jay Maharath** is an Albuquerque native who was Salutatorian of his high school class. He is now a senior majoring in Economics at the University of New Mexico where he serves as an officer of multiple student groups, including Students Organizing Actions for Peace and the National Society of Leadership and Success.
- **Brigid Quinn** grew up in Santa Fe and is a junior studying Sociology and Education at Bates College. Brigid previously worked with the United Way of Santa Fe County on their home visitation program and she is passionate about education policy.

Finally, Santa Fe Prep Valedictorian **Shannon Kossman** completed her Senior Internship Project with Think New Mexico in May 2016 before heading to Dartmouth College.



THINK NEW MEXICO: BY THE NUMBERS

12 + 3 ENACTED

TWELVE LANDMARK LAWS PLUS THREE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS SINCE OUR INCEPTION IN 1999

6,283 MESSAGES

SIX THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY THREE MESSAGES
SENT TO LAWMAKERS THROUGH OUR WEBSITE IN 2015

54 %

FINANCIAL SUPPORT COMES FROM
INDIVIDUALS

1% ENDOWMENTS
5% LOCAL BUSINESSES
40% FOUNDATIONS



1,069

INDIVIDUAL
SUPPORTERS

2015



4 YEARS

RANKED IN THE

TOP 100

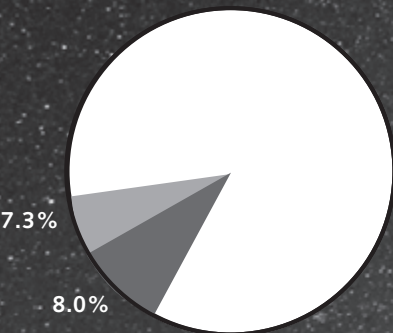
THINK TANKS IN THE WORLD FOR BEST ADVOCACY
CAMPAIGN BY **THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Statement of Income and Expenditures

INCOME	
Businesses	26,285
Car Donations	0
Foundation Grants	224,450
Individuals	287,192
Investment/Endowment Income	19,928
Miscellaneous Income & Sale of Reports	212
Total Income	\$558,067

EXPENDITURES	
Audit/Accounting	9,288
Benefits: Health, Dental & Disability Insurance	40,267
Benefits: Pension Plan & Fees	21,506
Computer Consulting & Website	9,692
Contract Services	3,650
Depreciation	6,087
Donated Real Estate Expenses	12,699
Educational Outreach	3,517
Graphic Design	1,550
Insurance	5,469
Internship Pay	14,062
Investment Management Fees	1,712
Legal Fees	1,735
Marketing	1,285
Online Vendor Processing Fee	1,994
Payroll Taxes	21,625
Postage	16,056
Printing & Bulk Copying	38,122
Professional Fundraising	0
Rent/Utilities Expense	31,753
Salaries	282,379
Security/Janitorial	1,694
Stewardship/Board Expenses	252
Supplies	2,554
Telephone & Internet	3,331
Training/Research/Dues	4,115
Travel	270
Total Expenses	\$536,664

Administrative & Fundraising Expenses as a Percentage of Cash Income: 2015



Think New Mexico’s fundraising expense as a percentage of cash income in 2015 was 8.0%.

Think New Mexico’s administrative overhead expense (“management and general”) as a percentage of cash income in 2015 was 7.3%.

NOTE:
These financial statements do not include unrealized investment appreciation.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY
Year Ended Dec. 31, 2015

Balance Sheet

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	306,656
Endowment Funds	107,902
Grants Receivable	9,750
Investments	728,403
Prepaid Expenses	4,239
Property and Equipment*	1,523,678
Total Assets	\$ 2,680,628
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	29,583
Accrued Expenses	304
Total Liabilities	\$ 29,887
NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	2,586,867
Temporarily Restricted	63,874
Total Net Assets	\$ 2,650,741
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 2,680,628

* Net of Accumulated Depreciation.

Source for pages 18– 19: Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2015 and Think New Mexico’s IRS Form 990 for 2015. Independent auditors: Swain & Grieco, LLC CPA.



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(JANUARY 1, 2015 — MAY 31, 2016)

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Santa Fe Community Foundation

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IMAGE:

White Sands National Monument

Kristina G. Fisher

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*Social investors with an asterisk by their names have contributed every year for the past four years.

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What's a "Social Investor?" We call our contributors "social investors" because we believe that nonprofits should be evaluated based on the social return they produce each year. For example, because Think New Mexico's 1999 income was \$109,499, the \$135 million appropriated annually for full-day kindergarten means that our investors continue to receive social dividends of approximately \$1,230 for every \$1 invested in Think New Mexico's initial full-day kindergarten project.

Featured on these pages are Think New Mexico social investors and friends wearing their Think New Mexico "thinking caps" around the world. Their names and locations are listed on the back inside cover.

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Think New Mexico’s social investors come from one hundred and fifteen communities across New Mexico (and beyond!).

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MAKING THINK NEW MEXICO A LASTING PART OF YOUR LEGACY

We are honored by the generosity of these friends and supporters, who have let us know that they intend to make Think New Mexico’s work a lasting part of their legacy by including Think New Mexico in their wills or estate plans (those listed in italics are deceased).

We also wish to extend our sincere thanks to several anonymous donors who have made provisions for legacy gifts to Think New Mexico. For more information on making a legacy gift, contact us at (505) 992-1315.

IMAGE:
San Mateo Mountains
Kristina G. Fisher

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- Kirsten Anderson
- Paul Bardacke
- Rob Coffland
- Ambassador Glenn Ferguson*
- & Patricia Ferguson
- Ira Jaffe
- Sylvia C. Koerber*
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If you have any questions, or are interested in donating your vehicle, please call the Center for Car Donations at 1-877-411-3662 (be sure to tell them that the donation is for Think New Mexico) or learn more on the Support page of Think New Mexico's website: www.thinknewmexico.org.

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" Thinking Cap" Photos

PAGE 21: Christian Alexander, Lionshead, Cape Town, South Africa;
Paula Lozar & cat at Yurt Camp, Lake Son-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

PAGE 24: Jim Rubin, Galisteo Basin Preserve, NM; 2015 Interns Noel
Martinez, Michael Sedillo & Seth Barany;
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PAGE 27: Keith & Anne Clemson, Canyonlands/Arches National Park;
David Hanna, North Island, New Zealand

PAGE 28: Allan Shedlin and Tom Garnevicus, Chevy Chase, MD;
Richard & Deborah Seligman with their son in New Mexico;
2015 Interns Julia Downs & Naftali Burakovsky

PAGE 31: Natalie Carter, Cotopaxi, Colorado

Acknowledgments

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