



West

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

2018 Border Legislative Conference

The Border Legislative Conference (BLC), which brings together legislators from the U.S. and Mexico border states, convened its 31st forum on August 9-11, 2018, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The meeting provided an opportunity for participating legislators to engage in a dialogue of a binational agenda and discuss complex issues inherent to the 2,000-mile long U.S. – Mexico border region.

Speakers addressed the changing border climate, including drought and floods, transboundary environmental collaboration, as well as energy opportunities and challenges in the border region given Mexico's energy reforms under the current administration. There was an update on the status of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) renegotiations, already into its first year. Two recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program were invited to share their personal narratives, how the uncertainty of the program's status affects their daily lives, and what they are accomplishing despite the looming threat of deportation. Attendees were introduced to New Mexico's interesting history and vibrant culture by David Roybal, former journalist, speechwriter and author. He also shared the story of the man portrayed in his acclaimed book, *"Manuel of the Americas: Historia de Fuertes Amores,"* which participants got to take home. The conference concluded with a passionate discussion on current policies regarding new immigrants arriving at the U.S. – Mexico border and the consequential separation of families under that new policy. A light lunch and tour of The Roundhouse, New Mexico's Capitol was offered for those who did not have to depart immediately.

Members and other participating legislators provided valuable feedback regarding their experience and the information they attained at the BLC. They liked hearing from experts on these important, binational policy issues and, above all, appreciated the opportunity to network with other lawmakers and stakeholders from across the border region. Although a quorum was not present to be able to adopt policy resolutions, a directive was given to staff to work on language for two resolutions: one supporting DACA and comprehensive immigration reform, and the other requesting alternatives to family separation for new immigrant arrivals. Both will be circulated among members in the coming months for their consideration.

This year's BLC was led by New Mexico Senator Carlos Cisneros, 2018 BLC Chair and the great host state team comprised of other BLC members, legislative leadership, and legislative staff. CSG West would like to thank all of them for making it so special!



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BLC annual meetings alternate between the U.S. and Mexico, rotating among all ten states with occasional gatherings in either Mexico City or Washington, D.C. to allow for dialogue with federal counterparts. With a newly-elected President, Senate, and Congress in Mexico, plans will soon get underway to convene the 32nd BLC in Mexico City during the fall of 2019.

Special thanks to the New Mexico Legislature for their support, as well as Sempra Energy for their sponsorship of the meeting.



Additional photos below...



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Santa Fe, New Mexico





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