

New Mexico State Visit

From February 4 to February 7, CSG West Director, Edgar Ruiz, and accompanying staff visited the New Mexico Capitol to meet with legislative leaders and connect with newly elected members. This included meetings with the Senate President, Speaker's staff, majority and minority floor leadership, Western Legislative Academy (WLA) alumni, and newly elected members.

There is a strong cadre of [WLA alumni](#) still holding public office in New Mexico, 39 in total. Most are serving in the legislature but WLA alumni also hold four statewide offices. During the visit, staff was able to meet over 20 newly elected members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. All are potential applicants for this year's WLA class.

Several members and staff hold leadership positions in CSG West for the 2019-2020 biennium. Among them is Legislative Council Service Director, Raúl Burciaga, as Chair of CSG West's [Legislative Service Agency & Research Directors](#) Committee. Representative Deborah Armstrong is Vice Chair of the [Health Committee](#). Senator Bill Soules serves as state liaison and Senator Benny Shendo is on the [Westrends Board](#).

CSG West hosted a coffee and donuts hour to meet and greet with members and legislative staff. National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators ([NHCSL](#)) Executive Director, Kenneth Romero and current President, Puerto Rico Senator Carmelo Rios Santiago- also Majority Leader - accompanied CSG West staff to share information about upcoming events. NHCSL, which is an affiliate of CSG, will be hosting its Executive Committee meeting in Santa Fe this August, as well as their Annual Meeting in Puerto Rico in December, immediately preceding CSG's National Conference.

After the November 2018 election, Democrats gained eight seats in the House and control the Senate with 26 seats, providing them a majority in both chambers. Women made significant gains in the House with 31 of the 70 seats. In the Senate, 8 women hold seats in the 42-member chamber. The state's first Democratic woman Governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham, was also elected. A former representative for the 1st congressional district, she served in Congress for 3 terms from January 2013 to December 2018, as well as in the executive branch under former Governors Bruce King, Gary Johnson, and Bill Richardson.

This year's sixty-day session has been a busy one. On February 4, the legislature sent 42 bills to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham as a package nicknamed the "rocket docket." This package of bills had been vetoed by former Governor Susana Martinez during the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions. For a list of the bills signed [click here](#).

As in other states, New Mexico is considering daylight savings time through two bills. The House bill ([HB 73](#)) would exempt the state from daylight savings to provide an extra hour of light in the morning while the Senate bill ([SB 226](#)) proposes switching to daylight savings time permanently to provide an extra hour of light in the evening.

Other legislation making its way through the process includes a moratorium on opening any new charter schools in the state until 2022 while reviews are conducted to find out how existing schools are currently performing. A court-ordered mandate to improve opportunities for low-income and minority students has put the state in a position to change the way it funds public education.

Although New Mexico has a history with natural resources such as oil and natural gas, several bills have been introduced to increase the use of renewable energy, including providing tax credits and allowing for cooperative ownership of a photovoltaic (PV) installation. Healthcare concerns are also under review through a Medicaid expansion bill that would create a state program where residents who currently earn too much to qualify for the program, or to qualify for marketplace subsidies under the Affordable Care Act, can buy into the system.

During the visit, information was also shared about the recent work of the CSG Justice Center in New Mexico. Staff from the Justice Center have been collaborating with a working group comprised of representatives from the legislature, judiciary, counties, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement officials, treatment providers, Native American communities, community advocacy groups, business, and leadership from six executive branch departments to assist in the state's Justice Reinvestment Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to develop data-driven policy options focused on increasing public safety, reducing crime, and finding ways to better manage corrections spending. In June 2018, New Mexico hosted a public safety forum in which CSG Justice Center staff presented on state trends related to crime, behavioral health, collateral consequences, and recidivism. Additionally, they presented on justice reinvestment approaches that other states have employed to analyze statewide system challenges and propose and implement impactful policy changes.



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THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

