

New Mexico State Visit

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The 2018 thirty-day legislative session in New Mexico began with the signing of the Enhanced Nurse Licensing Compact by Governor Susana Martinez. The original compact, developed and implemented in 2000, allowed nurses to have one state license and practice in other states that were part of the agreement. The enhanced version still allows this but also requires applicants to undergo state and federal fingerprint-based criminal background checks with the goal of increasing access to health care, support efficient health care delivery, and reduce costs to patients, hospitals, and insurance companies. In total, 29 states have signed on to this enhanced compact. In the Western region, those states are: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

The short session this year is primarily dedicated to passing a budget for 2018. Following years of lower revenues, legislators learned they would have almost \$200 million in unexpected revenues driven by an increase in oil and natural gas production. One third of state spending in New Mexico is supported by the oil and gas sector.

Legislators will be looking to put some funding into cash reserves and add to state programs that were previously cut. The Governor recommended a \$6.3 billion budget that included raises for state employees and teachers, and more funding for Medicaid and public schools.

Other legislation being considered includes a new tax on tobacco to fund education programs, net neutrality, and overhauling the state's gross receipts tax codes. State officials are also trying to understand the impact the federal tax overhaul will have on any future local tax reform.

Like many other states, the New Mexico Legislature revisited its policies against sexual harassment and misconduct and revised them ahead of the session. For the first time since 2004, all legislators were required to attend sexual harassment training prior to opening day. The new policy provides greater detail as to what behavior constitutes harassment and how to report complaints. Outside legal counsel will now participate in the investigation of complaints against any lawmaker, however, the House and Senate will retain control of discipline should they be found to be in violation of the new policy.



From January 23-25, CSG West staff members visited the State Capitol as part of the CSG West annual legislative visits. The twentieth session began on January 16 and is scheduled to conclude February 15. During the visit, CSG West staff met with legislative leaders and members to share information on 2018 programming and services available to members. Additionally, a breakfast was hosted for the alumni of the Western Legislative Academy (WLA), offering an additional opportunity for members and staff to visit and encourage promotion of the program to eligible lawmakers within their first four years of service.