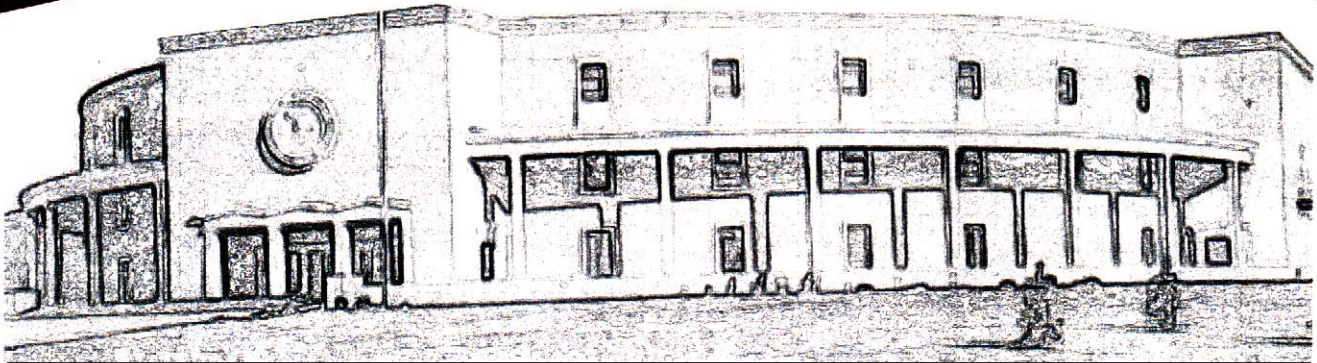


LEGISLEADER



48th Legislative Session - January 19, 2007 - Volume II

The *Legisleader* is the official legislative newsletter of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau...the state's largest and oldest agricultural organization. Farm Bureau....since 1917 a leader in New Mexico!

First week at the Roundhouse Concludes

By Cecilia Abeyta,
Director, Legislative Affairs
N.M. Farm and Livestock Bureau

New Mexico Legislators wasted no time gearing up for this year's 60-day session. The Senate introduced a total 292 bills while the House introduced 281, for a total of 573 bills the first week.

Representative Antonio Lujan from Las Cruces introduced HB80, which expands the coverage of worker's compensation to include farm and ranch laborers. The bill repeals the language that "exempts employers of farm and ranch laborers from paying to the worker's comp act."

Farm Bureau is concerned about this repeal. We have not been inquired to meet with the forces behind this initiative as to the

insurance coverage our producers already have. Should this legislation pass, it will increase producer's operating expenses. Our producers already have umbrella and business policies in place to address this issue. The ramifications of the legislation will result in double coverage. Another potential problem in the long run is the possibility of our state losing production to other countries. To that fact, commodities produced in other countries will not necessarily be of the same quality as those commodities produced in this state.

Since agriculture is an industry that is a price-taker and not a price-maker, the cost of double coverage can-

not be passed onto the consumer unlike other industries. The legislation is scheduled to go before the House Labor and Human Resources com-

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All Legislators - State Capitol Switchboard - (505) 986-4300.

State Land Office - (505) 827-5760.

Legislative Council Service - (505) 986-4600.

Office of the Governor (505) 476-2200.

N.M. Legislature homepage - www.legis.state.nm.us/

N.M. Farm Bureau Website - www.nmfarmbureau.org.

Water Conservation Issues Included in Governor's State of the State Address

By Christopher Coon
Managing Editor, N.M.
Farm and Ranch Magazine

The Governor has labeled this year's legislative session as "the Year of the Water," and said during his State of the State speech that "any effort (in the area of water legislation) must never forget and always protect New Mexico's agricultural heritage and traditional reliance on acequias."

The Governor is requesting the following initiatives pertaining to water conservation:

- A "River Ecosystem Restoration;"
- Standards in building codes;
- The Strategic Water Reserve;
- An increase in the Water Trust Fund for water infrastructure;
- A system to detect water leaks statewide; and
- The creation of a New Mexico Office of Water Infrastructure which the Governor says would provide a one-stop shop for citizens and communities for infrastructure needs.

The New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau will be closely monitoring all water legislation and in that realm, is focusing lobbying efforts in the following areas:

Domestic Well Legislation

Farm Bureau will support legislation that would change the permitting process for domestic wells in basins that are fully appropriated. We believe domestic wells should be allowed in fully appropriated basins **ONLY WITH AN ACCOMPANYING WATER RIGHT**, so a net depletion of existing water does not occur. This would protect the rights of existing water right holders and would take away the potential for water to be taken from those who currently own the water. Legislation of this type is essential in order to protect senior water right owners.

Leveling the Playing Field in Terms of Water Conservation

Farm Bureau favors legislation that will level the playing field in the area of water conservation. Farm Bureau wants the same rights for production agriculture that municipalities currently have in terms of water conservation.

Currently, when a producer is able to conserve water, that water is taken away from the producer. In the State Engineer's proposed Active Water Resource Management regulations for example, if a producer is using less water than allot-

ted for his acreage in production agriculture and leases or sells the conserved water, the producer is required to retire a proportionate amount of the production land until the lease expires. If the excess water is sold, the producer must retire a proportionate amount of production land permanently.

Farm Bureau believes that legislation stating that conserved water may be leased, sold or put to further the economic base of crop production, without requiring the producer to reduce production acreage, would do a better job of encouraging water conservation. Farm Bureau believes the same conditions pertaining to water conservation that exist for municipalities should exist for production agriculture. Currently, if a municipality implements conservation measures and has "excess" water, economic development can continue without the municipality being penalized. Neither economic development or water is taken away.

Summary of the 2007 State of the State Address

By Cecilia Abeyta,
Director, Legislative Affairs
N.M. Farm and Livestock
Bureau

Governor Bill Richardson provided an overview of the administration's goals including higher wages, better schools, the protection of water and natural resources, accessible health care and a fiscal responsible government. Governor Richardson also stated that past goals have been accomplished through a partnership with the legislature and that progress was put above politics! He added that more than 80,000 jobs have been created since taking office and that the unemployment rate has dropped from 5.8 percent to 4.3 percent.

During the first 30 days of the session, the Governor is requesting that his "4-part action agenda" be passed since these items were debated during the 2006, 30-day session. The agenda includes:

- Minimum wage increase to \$7.50 per hour;
- The creation of a Renewable Energy Transmission Authority-exporting wind and solar;
- GRIPII for city and county infrastructure- roads; and
- Tax cuts of more than \$123-million.

In addition to the action items

above, the Governor proposes several initiatives in the following areas:

Education

- Education is important and he is committed to modernizing the state's public schools that are in dire need of repairs. He is asking the legislature for \$283 million to update public schools.
- An appropriation of \$20 million for charter schools.
- "Tough accountability standards" for teachers with a 7.4 percent increase in teacher's salaries.
- Assisting students in becoming more proficient in reading and math by "investing in after-school enrichment programs for tutoring and mentoring. Second, he is advocating longer school years and extended school days while implementing summer institutes and paying for math and reading.
- Investing \$50 million in the College Affordability Act that would provide 2,500 scholarships for the needy.
- Limit tuition hikes in colleges to no more than 5 percent in the next three years and a tax credit to help pay for higher education.

DWI

With recent tragedies in our state, Governor Richardson is initiating an ignition interlock law with prior DWI convictions for out of state applicants and increase the funding for substance abuse prevention.

Health Care

Health care continues to be a concern and the Governor is requesting that access to health care be expanded to cover an additional 34,000 New Mexicans. To accomplish this, first, the eligibility for Medicaid would be raised to 100 percent of the federal poverty level low income. Second, the state coverage program for middle-class working adults would be expanded

Ethics Reform

The Governor's Ethics Reform Task Force provided the Governor with the following proposals.

- An independent ethics commission;
- Campaign reporting;
- Public financing for judicial candidates; and
- Limits on gifts and campaign

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contributions.

Tax Cuts/Credits

-The Governor's agenda for tax cuts known as the "Working Families Tax Credit," is aimed to help 139,000 New Mexico taxpayers in the middle-income bracket and to reduce the tax rate from 5.3 percent to 5.1 percent in 2007. This personal tax cut began in 2003.

Military

New Mexico's military is in the Governor's heart! He recognizes the sacrifices that our men and women provide to our state. The Governor is proposing to eliminate the income tax for those military forces serving on active duty and is proposing a 50 percent deduction of earned income up to \$50,000 for skilled veterans who put their skills to work in our state.

He added that incentives are critical in order for the state to attract new industries. He suggested incentives such as a tax credit for investment management firms, a reduction in tax pyramiding and a tax credit for high-tech industries.

Water and Environment

Water Conservation:

As 2007 has been designated "the Year of the Water," the Governor believes that "any effort must never forget and always protect New Mexico's

agricultural heritage and traditional reliance on acequias." We can anticipate the Governor supporting most legislation introduced in this area.

In addition, the Governor is requesting the following initiatives pertaining to water conservation: A "River Ecosystem Restoration," standards in building codes, the Strategic Water Reserve, an increase in the Water Trust Fund for water infrastructure and a system to detect water leaks statewide.

He is also calling for the creation of a New Mexico Office of Water Infrastructure which he says would provide a one-stop shop for citizens and communities for infrastructure needs.

Securing New Mexico's Clean and Reliable Drinking Water:

- Development of the Ute pipeline for Curry and Roosevelt counties,

- Mining of underground water in Otero Mesa for southern counties, and

- Access safe drinking water for the Eastern Navajo Nation.

Global Warming

Though the federal government has not moved forward by implementing Kyoto protocols, the Governor is pursuing New Mexico to be the leading state in the Nation in the following areas:

- Renewable energy by using 100 percent renewable energy for government buildings.

- Reduction of carbon emissions standards by requiring stringent standards for new cars and trucks sold in the state hoping to cut emissions within the next ten years by 30 percent.

- Coal Tax Incentive for new coal fired power plants in the state for the installation of state of the art pollution controls and carbon dioxide reductions.

- Tax credits for green buildings for homes and offices and the creation of the Energy Innovation Fund for the development of clean energy.

- A one month tax holiday for consumers to purchase appliances that are energy efficient.

Conservation Fund

The Land Wildlife Clean Energy Act was introduced in the 2006 session but time ran out. The Governor is supporting this initiative that will protect land and wildlife, implement clean energy projects, acquire water and land and implement conservation easements to protect working farms and ranches.

In closing, The Governor asked for wisdom, help, guidance and leadership from the people of the state to be carried by their representatives!

For the text of the entire State of the State Address, [click here](#).

AgFest Heading for the City Different

The annual celebration of the state's diverse agricultural industry is set for Feb. 15, at the La Fonda Hotel in downtown Santa Fe. The event will begin at 6 p.m. and features an opportunity for Farm Bureau members to visit with their elected state representatives in a relaxed, festive atmosphere. A showcase of food from the Land of Enchantment and other agricultural products is

the centerpiece of this tradition.

The annual legislative breakfast will convene on the morning of Feb. 15 at 7:00 am at the La Fonda Hotel. Our Legislative guest speakers are Representative Joseph Cervantes from Las Cruces and Senator John Ryan from Albuquerque. Both Legislators are co-sponsoring legislation pertaining to agriculture water conservation. Other Farm Bureau events as-

sociated with AgFest this year include a Council of County Farm Bureau presidents meeting on Feb. 14 at 1:30 p.m. and a New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau board of directors meeting on Feb. 15-16. The La Fonda Hotel is located at 100 E. San Francisco St., downtown Santa Fe. For more information on AgFest, call (505) 532-4702.

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committee next week, January 23 at 1:30pm. Please contact your legislators who may sit on this committee to let them know your concerns. To call your legislator,

call the legislative switchboard at (505) 986-3600. You can also log onto <http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/legislatorsearch.asp>, for direct contact information.

The following Representatives are Labor and Human Re-

sources Committee members:
Miguel P. Garcia
Manuel G. Herrera
Candy Spence Ezzell
Rick Miera
Sheryl Williams Stapelton
Shirley A. Tyler