



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
Santa Fe

NATE GENTRY

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Dear Neighbor,

Now that the dust from last week's special session has settled, it's time to assess some of the important victories we were able to secure for New Mexicans. I very much appreciate all of you who took the time to share your concerns and comments.

After this year's regular legislative session, Governor Martinez vetoed parts of the budget package lawmakers had sent to her, and called the Legislature into a special session on May 24, 2017 to work on a new budget plan for New Mexico.

Thankfully, the special session time was well spent as we corrected a few major problems with the higher education funding plan legislators originally sent to the Governor.

The proposed budget that Governor Martinez vetoed would have cut funding to UNM's Cancer Center and pediatric oncology treatment services. Within the past few years, UNM's Cancer Center has embarked on important research in the areas of adolescent cancer, neuro-oncology and survivor care. New Mexicans depend on these life-saving programs, and reducing support for cancer treatment and research could have threatened the progress being made.

In addition, the original budget plan would have cut crucial financial aid programs for higher education students. Money for work-study assistance and financial aid for Vietnam Veterans as well as dental and veterinary students would have been affected.

Fortunately, we used this as an opportunity to fix the budget and prevent ill-advised cuts to these critical programs. Not only were we able to reverse these proposed cuts, we were able to secure an additional \$1 million for the UNM Cancer Center as well as an extra \$1 million for higher education financial aid assistance.

These increases will directly benefit New Mexicans throughout the state. While the budget we approved during the special session was not ideal, it ensures that essential state services will continue to be delivered without interruption.

This budget will not solve all of New Mexico's challenges. I still believe that legislators have a spending problem, and as state legislators, we must ensure that we pass budget that force the state within its means while supporting priority programs.

I am especially troubled by the tax increases that were proposed this year. All totaled, over \$1.6 billion in new taxes were proposed during the two legislative sessions held this year. Given that New Mexico's economy still

has not fully recovered from the recession, I worry about impact these tax increases could have on private sector business growth in our state.

I am pleased that we were able to pass legislation to defer funding for legislators' pet projects for a year and instead use that \$71 million to fund core government services like health care, K-12 education and public safety. I believe this is a far better alternative than raising taxes on New Mexico families and small businesses.

I also firmly believe that we should enact comprehensive tax reform soon if we are to build a state economy that is competitive with other southwestern states. Legislators have pledged to study the issue again during the upcoming months, and I am hopeful that we can come to an agreement on a plan that will simplify our tax code and put all of New Mexico's taxpayers on a level playing field.

During the special session legislators were able to work together and compromise on some key items important to all New Mexicans. I hope we can learn from this year's budget process and begin working together earlier to avoid a repeat of this situation in future years.

As always, please feel free to call me at home should the need arise - 508-0782.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "-Nate". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nate Gentry
State Representative