

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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A Lot of Special Considerations

The First Special Session of the 50th Legislature convened at noon on Tuesday, and there are a lot of issues for lawmakers to consider. In addition to re-drawing state Legislative, Congressional, Public Regulation Commission and Public Education Commission districts, the Governor sent legislators a number of other issues she wants them to tackle during the special session. With as many topics on the Governor's "call," it's anyone's guess as to how long the special session will last. By law, a special session can last only 30 days. Here are some of the issues the Governor has put forward that are of municipal interest:

A bill providing the Governor, municipalities and counties the authority to proclaim a state of emergency to ban or restrict the sale and use of fireworks (except display fireworks) in the event of high fire hazard as indicated by the Fire Danger Rating System. (HB 20, Representative Gentry)

A bill relating to Capital Outlay that provides \$212.7 million in funding for important regional and statewide infrastructure, development and road maintenance. A similar bill died on the last day of the regular session. (SB 10, Senator Cisneros)

A bill modifying the procurement preference advantage for in-state businesses, changing the definition of "resident business" and "resident contractor," changing the process for obtaining certification as a resident business or resident contractor, eliminating preferences for resident manufacturers and New York state businesses and providing for related penalties. A similar bill from the regular session was vetoed by the Governor. (SB 1, Senator Keller and Representative Larrañaga)

A bill requiring unemployment insurance contributions to remain at the Contribution Schedule I rate through the end of the calendar year 2013, transferring \$130 million in reserves to the Unemployment Insurance Fund to maintain an adequate reserve in that Fund, and directing the Advisory Council previously created in the Unemployment Compensation Law to prepare recommendations to the Legislature for statutory changes to provide for the permanent solvency of the Fund while assuring impartiality and freedom from political influence. The Governor vetoed a similar bill passed during the regular session. (HB 19, Representative Stewart)

A bill discontinuing the issuance of New Mexico driver's licenses and identification cards to illegal immigrants, requiring an applicant for a New Mexico driver's license or identification card to provide a valid Social Security number or, if a foreign national, to provide a valid passport, valid visa, or other valid document issued by the federal Department of Homeland Security, and limiting the duration of driver's licenses or identification cards issued to eligible foreign nationals to the duration of the authorized period of admission or extension of stay. This issue was one of the most debated items during the regular session. It passed the House but died in the Senate. (HB 18, Representative Nuñez)

The Governor also included measures to merge several state agencies, including combining the Tourism Department with the Cultural Affairs Department (HB 17, Representative Bandy). The following two issues have not been introduced yet: making the Information Technology Department a division of the General Services Department; and making the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management a division of the Department of Public Safety.

Senate Joint Memorial 1, introduced by Senator John Arthur Smith, requests the federal Department of Homeland Security to approve regulations allowing for 75 miles of travel within the radius of ports of entry into New Mexico by Mexican nationals. An identical House Joint Memorial (HJM 1) was introduced Thursday by Representative Donna Irwin et al. The League adopted the same language in a 2011-12 Resolution during the League's Annual Conference in Roswell.