



## League Board sets 2016 Legislative Priorities

The following issues have been determined by the League Board of Directors to be the League's 2016 Legislative Priorities. The 2016 Legislature convenes on January 19, 2016 and will last for 30 days.

- **Amendments to the Hold Harmless Gross Receipts Distribution** – Support amendments to provide an additional supplemental distribution where the Local Option Hold Harmless Gross Receipts Tax does not generate enough revenue to equal the hold harmless distribution.
- **Administration of Local Government Gross Receipts Taxes** – Establish a local government unit within the Taxation and Revenue Department to handle the administration and distribution issues affecting cities and counties. This unit would be funded by the existing administrative fee already being charged to local governments.
- **Funding for Municipal Streets, Roads and Bridges** – Municipalities receive a distribution of 2 cents gasoline tax that is earmarked for streets, roads and bridges. That funding has not received an increase in almost 30 years. The League supports an increase in the municipal share of these taxes or the authority to levy a local option gasoline and special fuels tax.
- **Law Enforcement Protection Fund** – Support an increase in funding for law enforcement from the existing Law Enforcement Protection Fund. This Fund is from an existing insurance premium tax.
- **PERA Return to Work Provisions** – Municipalities are experiencing serious shortages in critical areas of our work forces. The League supports legislation that restores “return to work” provisions for law enforcement, fire service, EMS first responders, water and waste water operators, certified electric utility employees and correctional retirees.
- **Local Option Taxes and State Shared Revenues** – Support the continuation of the current distribution of State Shared Revenues and the authority for Local Option Taxes.
- **Bond Issue for Libraries** – The League endorses the passage of a General Obligation Bond for the funding of libraries.

## Los Lunas Administrative Assistant Debra Sanchez Receives CMC Designation from IIMC

Debra Sanchez, Administrative Assistant for the Village of Los Lunas, has been awarded the Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC).

The CMC designation program is designed to enhance the job performance of the Clerk in small and large municipalities. To earn the CMC designation, a Municipal Clerk must attend extensive education programs. The designation also requires pertinent experience in a municipality. The program prepares the participants to meet the challenges of the complex role of the municipal clerks by providing them with quality education in partnership with 47 institutions of higher learning. The program has been in existence since 1970 and has helped thousands of clerks in various municipalities.

Founded in 1947, IIMC is a professional association with more than 10,000 members in the US, Canada and 15 other countries. IIMC's primary goal is to actively promote the continuing education and professional development of municipal clerks through extensive education programs, certification, recertification, publications, networking, annual conferences and research.

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## Getting to Know You

This feature focuses on learning more about the League Executive Committee, Board of Directors and other elected officials. This month is League Board Member Phillip Burch, Mayor of Artesia.



### What was your primary motivation to run for political office in your community?

The state of the Artesia City Council in the year 2000 was one of transition. The late 1900s saw a number of long-term City Councilors leaving office and I had neighbors and co-workers encouraging me to run. I did run, and somehow won a seat on the City Council in the year 2000. In 2008 I was appointed to complete the unfinished term of my good friend Mayor Manuel Madrid. I am now in my 8th year as Mayor with two years left on my current term.

### How do you view your role in serving as an elected official in your community?

My primary focus has been to build sound infrastructure and public safety facilities and departments. We have worked very hard in our community to staff these departments with dedicated personnel with qualified and progressive leadership. We have provided a good deal of funding to upgrade our facilities.

### What do you think is the primary role of municipal government?

I believe the role of elected local officials is to fill those needs that citizens cannot fill for themselves. Streets, water, sewer and public safety functions. Quality of life goals should always be a part of local government plans. Local government should focus on maintaining a community that allows citizens to live, work and raise their family in a safe and healthy environment.

### What do you think is the primary role of the New Mexico Municipal League in municipal government?

The League provides expertise in areas that small and medium sized communities cannot afford to have on staff. The League staff keeps community leaders aware of state and federal issues and assists in supporting or opposing issues that are of vital interest to the community.

### What is your favorite "after work" pastime?

I play golf, not because I am good at it but because I enjoy it.



# Team Player

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## FAA Funding – What It Means for New Mexico Aviation

By Stacy Howard  
Regional Representative,  
National Business Aviation Association

Approximately three-quarters of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) expenses are paid from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, supported by taxes on aviation fuel, airline tickets, air cargo, and international passengers. But FAA's ability to spend those dollars depends upon Congress passing an FAA Reauthorization bill. The House Transportation Committee will likely introduce their version of FAA Reauthorization first, and the Senate will follow. It is likely the bills will be significantly different, and the negotiation process to passing a final bill will take time.

FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides up to 95% match to New Mexico's public airports for capitol improvements. Without AIP Grants, many local governments struggle to maintain runways, taxiways and ramps, upgrade lighting, navigation aids, and interior roads, or plan for future development. The last FAA reauthorization required 23 short-term funding extensions, a process that wreaked havoc on local municipalities' ability to plan, fund and bond projects at their airports.

Arguably, the biggest controversy in this year's reauthorization will be the privately operated Air Traffic Control Organization funded by user fees proposed by House Transportation Chairman Bill Shuster. By all measures, America has the largest, safest, most efficient and diverse air transportation system in the world, and fuel tax is the perfect mechanism to fund that system. Fuel taxes are easy to pay, difficult to avoid, paid in advance, and closely approximate one's use of the system. They create incentives to invest in new technologies, and do not require a bureaucracy of agents and auditors to administer.

Long-term, multi-year authorization for FAA and AIP are essential to sustain New Mexico's aviation system. While it is important we continue to modernize the system, Congress does not need to turn over its taxing authority to special interests, or relinquish control of our country's National Airspace System, in order to do it.

## NMED Offers Free Water Infrastructure Resources

The New Mexico Environment Department is excited to share free resources to help bring awareness around the importance of water infrastructure through a five series set of flyers and bill stuffers available for all to use. Materials are available online and will be updated every other month beginning January 15<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, questions, and to access the resources please visit the Water Infrastructure Team's website at <https://www.env.nm.gov/WIT/>



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# State Auditor's Report Offers a Snapshot of New Mexico's Financial Health

Office of the State Auditor

Audits aren't very glamorous, but if you care about good government, they are extremely important. In order to hold our government accountable, taxpayers need to know how governments are handling our money. Until recently, much of that information was buried within the hundreds of audits completed each year.

Now, a report is available that compiles this information and makes it accessible to the public and policymakers. This gives New Mexicans an opportunity to learn the nuts and bolts of how state and local governments are protecting and accounting for our money.

The New Mexico State Auditor's Office released the first of its kind report called *The Findings Report: A Summary of New Mexico's Governmental Financial Audits*. The report analyzes the most recent audits of hundreds of entities across New Mexico, state agencies, cities, counties and school districts. The results provide a snapshot of how government is working using three measures: the audit opinion (a measure of transparency); types of annual audit findings (a measure of good practices); and repeated audit findings (a measure of progress toward fixing what is broken).

Several valuable insights surface in *The Findings Report*. First, New Mexico can be proud that the vast majority of governmental entities are accounting for public dollars in a transparent, reliable manner. Ninety-four percent of entities received an "unmodified" audit opinion, meaning they are providing reliable financial information to the public. Unfortunately, a handful of state agencies received less favorable opinions, including the Corrections Department, General Services Department, Regulation and Licensing Department, and the Office of Secretary of State.

Secondly, the number of audit "findings" speaks to accounting practices and compliance with laws. Fewer findings are better. Of the over 2,000 findings across audited entities, 50 percent represented significant issues or problems. Entities with the most findings include the Public Education Department, Albuquerque Public Schools, the City of Albuquerque, and Cibola County.

Twenty-six percent of governmental entities had unmodified opinions with no findings, indicating a clean bill of health. Some of these are the Legislative Finance Committee, New Mexico Supreme Court, and Commission of Public Records.

Thirdly, *The Findings Report* indicates that almost half of all audit findings were repeated from a previous year. Our office will now require corrective action plans to address weaknesses in financial controls. Many findings relate to "component units," such as charter schools in a school district or a housing authority in a city. Although the primary governments do not manage the day-to-day operations of component units, accounting standards require their inclusion in an audit because of the oversight responsibility. A question for policymakers is how to increase the effectiveness of that oversight.

The State Auditor's Office will release *The Findings Report* yearly, giving the public and policymakers a mechanism to track public dollars. Fraud, waste and abuse can happen anywhere, but these measures show us where our state is particularly vulnerable.

*The Findings Report* is available here:  
[http://osanm.org/government\\_accountability\\_office](http://osanm.org/government_accountability_office).



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