

New Mexico legislature to contemplate budget adjustments

BY PHIL SAN FILIPPO

This is not an enviable time to be a State Legislator in any State, but it's a particularly difficult time for New Mexico State legislators. New Mexico is the only State Legislature that is unpaid; but they do receive per diem during the session. New Hampshire does not extend a salary but extends a \$200 per year per diem for their State Legislators. All other States, whether part-time or full-time, offer their legislators a salary ranging from \$10,000 - \$110,000 plus per diem expenses. Regardless of salary level, each of these legislators will have great challenges to bring their respective States' economy back to resiliency.

New Mexico will have particular and unique challenges moving forward. With the New Mexico budget so reliant on gas and oil, the collapse of the oil market is causing New Mexico to face serious shortfalls moving forward. Thankfully, the Legislature in its wisdom, has set aside

a cushion for unforeseen difficulties. However, I don't believe anyone was prepared for such a horrific crisis as Covid 19 has caused. When the budget was being prepared, it was based on oil being at approximately \$52 per barrel. Today, as I write this document, oil has climbed back to \$24 per barrel after hitting negative numbers for the first time just a few weeks ago. As the economy begins to open up and people begin to move around again, there is no doubt that the demand for oil will increase and the price of oil will rise.

As the New Mexico Legislators contemplate adjustments to the budget, I hope they take notice of lessons learned from other States when crisis budget cutting was necessary. One of the biggest temptations is to cut the tourism budget. Many people consider it a non-essential function of the State's economy. Tourism is one of the top revenue-generating industries of the

New Mexico. Tourism fills hotels, restaurants and



New Mexico faces budget questions. (Courtesy photo)

attractions. Tourists tend to shop in our stores, purchase goods and services and will help us stabilize our economy much faster. Tourists will also purchase gas and oil that will increase the demand and the cost per barrel to higher levels. Additionally, all of this increases gross receipts and income taxes to the state. In other words, the investment we make in marketing for tourists will generate many

more dollars and help us restart our economy.

Of course, some will say summer is coming and New Mexico is amazing, so why spend money trying to bring tourists to New Mexico when they will come with or without marketing? Other destinations have tried, and other destinations have failed. These are unique times and the Covid 19 pandemic has made many people a bit nervous

to travel. No question there is pent-up demand for travel; but there is also fear and apprehension. People, now more than ever, will need to be motivated to come. They will also need to be reassured that not only is New Mexico open for business, but New Mexico is safely open for business.

Learning from Mistakes of Others

In 1994, Colorado was the top year-round destination. They had everything going for them. They were the top Ski destination and a top US summer destination. Colorado's tourism budget was approximately \$12 million. The Colorado legislature made the decision to cut the budget. The reason was simple. Since Colorado was top year-round, everyone knew about Colorado and there was no need to advertise. Over the next 7 years the results were devastating. According to Colorado estimates, the first year the State lost over \$1 Billion of Revenue. Each year over the next six years the estimated

revenue continued to decline. The Colorado Tourism Office was reopened 20 years ago, and they have aggressively marketed to regain the market share they have lost. Although Colorado had managed to recapture its title as # 1 for Winter Vacations. Colorado has never fully recaptured its position as the # 1 Summer playground. There are always new and stronger competitors. Out of sight is simply out of mind in the tourism industry and right now the stakes are just too high.

I urge our State Legislature to be mindful in its deliberations. Any cuts to the Tourism budget could be very harmful to the recovery of our State. Hospitality is a major revenue driver that our state heavily relies on to put New Mexicans back to work and bring revenue back into our State's coffers. Tourism Marketing supports hotels, restaurants, attractions, retail and so much of our State's economy. I urge our legislators to be thoughtful and mindful with their deliberations.

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FROM THE LOS AMIGOS CHAIR

Coming Together in a Time of Need

It's hard to believe that we are already in the month of May. These last two months have felt like an eternity, as if time has stood still. Not too long ago, everything was normal. We all were going through our daily routines, until our lives were turned upside down. Something called the Coronavirus or COVID-19, changed our lives forever. Everyone's daily lives have been impacted by this pandemic. We all must adapt to a new normal and for the near future, we will be living this new normal.

The one bright star in this cloud of unknown is how communities have come together. It is heartwarming to see the support of essential workers who risk their lives every day just by going to work. These workers continue to stock the shelves of



AMANDA MORALES

our grocery stores, clean our offices and schools so that our children return to a safe environment, and take care of our loved ones at doctors' offices and hospitals. The community has continued to come together by increasing volunteering hours, donating basic-need items such as cleaning supplies and with monetary donations from individuals and companies, big and small.

It's because of those individual and company

donations that the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico, in partnership with the United Way of Southwest New Mexico, has been able to create the Nonprofit Emergency Fund to provide micro-grants to nonprofit organizations in Southwest New Mexico, spanning seven counties; Doña Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Otero and Sierra. During this pandemic, nonprofit services have become essential, with a high demand from individuals and families because of the increase in unemployment. However, with the increase in need of services, on the other end, there has been an economic downfall with the decrease in monetary donations. The fund, which operates on an as-needed basis, assists nonprofits in time of great need due to a

community need, natural disaster and/or response to overwhelming loss of operational revenues during this COVID-19 health pandemic.

Emergency assistance is an integral part of our mission at the United Way. Our efforts to mobilize the caring power of our community are only made possible with the collaboration with the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico. Our hope with the fund is to help sustain those organizations doing important work in the region so they can keep serving our community even in times of crisis. Nonprofits truly are a vital part of this community. As of today, the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico and United Way of Southwest New Mexico have provided funding to

29 organizations in the southwest region. These grants range from \$500 to \$5,000 specifically for agencies with an organizational budget of \$500,000 or less.

It is because of collaborations with partners like the Community Foundation and the generosity from our community members that nonprofit organizations can continue to operate and thrive in these times of uncertainty. As a nonprofit organization, I (United Way) cannot imagine accomplishing the work that we do daily without the generosity of our donors and support from our nonprofit partners. So, as we are still adjusting to this new normal and find new daily routines, I would just like to say thank you to our community!



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Moving Forward Safely Through COVID-19

Who would have imagined that since the 1918 Spanish Flu which affected 500 million people, we would again be invaded with another pandemic 100 years later? Who would believe that people across the world would have to shelter in place to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus?

Like many New Mexicans across the state we stayed home to help reduce the spread of this deadly virus. Since March 23 until now I have been out of the house about three times a week to support our local restaurants and to pick up ordered-online groceries. Each time, I was equipped with my mask, gloves, Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer. For now, this may be the way to safely move forward.

COVID-19 has changed the world and has disrupted major industries such as tourism and manufacturing, and many other sectors have been horribly affected. Small businesses



CURTIS ROSEMOND
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have been hit the hardest. 33 million people have lost their jobs and have filed for unemployment in the last month. People who are still working, may have had their incomes cut up to 50 percent or more.

On a positive note, we have our essential workers. They are our heroes who are out there trying to take care of us each and every day. We are truly thankful for the first responders, the medical professionals, care givers, the financial institutions, the food pantries, the curbside restaurants, hotels, grocery-store employees,

truckers, deliver workers, farmers and the sanitation workers. They are the individuals providing us with the essential services we need. These are the heroes that we praise for their hard work and commitment in keeping our community moving forward.

We applaud all the other nonprofit organizations who have come together to help provide their guidance and support for our community, including Non-profits Families and Youth, Aprendamos Intervention Team, the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico, the United Way of Southwest New Mexico and the Roadrunner Food Bank and many more. I know that Lorenzo Alba, our chairman and the executive director of Casa de Peregrinos, along with his amazing staff, have been working diligently and overtime to ensure the families in our county have nutritional food and water.

We at the LCHCC would also like to acknowledge all the local individuals that

are committed in helping our community. Debbie Moore, president and CEO of the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce and chair for the New Mexico Chamber Executive Association, along with all the other chambers statewide are collaborating on ways to help business communities with weekly communication and resources. The statewide communication will help keep us moving forward.

There are so many individuals who have been local and state champions, like restaurant owner and entrepreneur Marci Dickerson of "The Game" and NMSU regent Ammu Devasthali of the Devasthali Family Fund and State Auditor Brian Colon, just to name a few. They have made outstanding contributions in our community.

So, as our governor proceeds with plans to re-open our state and loosen up some of its restrictions, we all must move forward continuing to be safe in how we maneuver around

each other. Moving forward correctly will determine how we can defeat this deadly virus.

If you are able to donate or safely volunteer some time at a nonprofit charity like a food bank, that would be wonderful. I know that we are a resilient community and we will come together more united. We will move forward as we start to get back to some normality.

Your Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber will continue to keep you, our members, informed on all COVID-19 and governmental updates. During these difficult times we are here for you. As a member of the Las Cruces

Hispanic Chamber we are able to help you promote your business re-opening opportunities and services throughout our database. We could even recognize an unsung hero from your organization. Simply send us your information on a flyer in a jpeg format to cr@lascruceshispanicchamber.com and we will e-blast it for you free of charge.

Your LCHCC appreciates your support and we look forward to serving you. We want to remind you to keep social distancing in place, wash your hands often and please express kindness to everyone as we move forward.

Stay healthy and safe.

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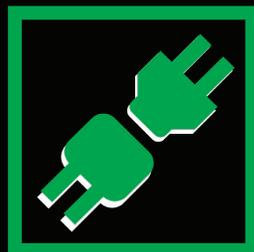
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FROM OUR U.S. SENATOR

Small Businesses Need Our Support

BY U.S. SENATOR
MARTIN HEINRICH

Small businesses and non-profits in southern New Mexico are the cornerstones of thriving communities and need support now more than ever. I am deeply aware of how much this public health crisis has wreaked havoc on employers and their workers across every industry and in every corner of our state.



HEINRICH

Whole sectors of our economy, including our tourism and hospitality industries, have been completely upended.

The measures we have taken to make sure everyone stays home are absolutely the right thing to do to protect the health of our families, neighbors, and friends. But we need to make sure all of those who temporarily shut down their businesses or were forced to lay off workers and staff for this righteous cause can access critical support.

I fought hard to secure major economic relief measures for small businesses and non-profits hurt by the coronavirus pandemic in the CARES Act—the \$2.2 trillion law that Congress passed in March. The CARES Act includes \$349 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program – or PPP – which can provide up to \$10 million in loans from the for small businesses and nonprofits with up to 500 employees.

In April, Congress passed an additional \$310 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program with \$30 billion reserved specifically for community-based lenders, small banks, and credit unions and \$30 billion for mid-sized banks and credit unions. It also expands small business support by including another \$50 billion for the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), and \$10 billion in SBA emergency disaster grants.

It is clearly urgent to get more funds into programs that can serve as critical lifelines for small businesses that are really struggling right now. I have been disappointed and deeply frustrated with the shortcomings in the delivery of these programs by the Trump administration and will continue to hold them accountable. I hope the additional funding and key

fixes we have made to these programs will allow the New Mexico small businesses who need help—not just those who are well-connected—to finally receive it.

There is still much more work ahead that will require major investments in a broader public health response that's rooted in science, and a strong long-term economic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic. I am working night and day to secure additional funding to support the lifesaving work being done by New Mexico's health care providers. We must also scale up a much larger, national testing infrastructure that is absolutely critical to restoring confidence and reopening our economy.

Resuming normal life relies on making COVID-19 testing readily available across the country, and ensuring that data is accessible and transparent. Until researchers develop scientifically validated therapies and vaccines, testing is the only way we can provide businesses and consumers with the certainty and confidence to reopen safely.

I am committed to working with all of you in the days and months ahead to rebuild thriving businesses and local economies across our state. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if I can help you and your business or organization by visiting Heinrich.Senate.Gov or calling my Las Cruces office at (575) 523-6561.

FROM OUR U.S. SENATOR

The Covid-19 Crisis: We must keep our focus on working families and small businesses

BY U.S. SEN. TOM UDALL

The COVID-19 pandemic has struck our nation like none other in 100 years, and has been a disaster for public health and the economy. New Mexico's working families and small businesses have taken a hard hit.

I am laser-focused on making sure that New Mexico families and small businesses stay safe and financially secure, and that our frontline healthcare providers have the critical resources they need to do their jobs while staying safe themselves.

Congress has passed four relief packages, totaling almost \$3 trillion – a historic amount. While all bills passed on a strong bipartisan basis, there were intense negotiations in which Democrats succeeded in securing:

- Increased funding for small businesses to support their payrolls,
- Improved unemployment benefits for workers who lost their jobs,
- Increased funding for hospitals and frontline healthcare workers,
- Increased funding for testing necessary to restart the economy safely, and
- Greater support for state and local governments facing budget disaster and \$10 billion dedicated to Tribal governments.

A centerpiece of this legislative work is the Paycheck Protection Program or “PPP” that gives small businesses loans of up to \$10 million. The loans turn into grants if businesses maintain their payrolls.

Through the first round of funding,



UDALL

8,277 loans for New Mexico small businesses were approved for a total of over \$1.4 billion. This represents real relief for struggling businesses.

However, we've seen the stories of bigger businesses crowding out smaller ones for PPP funding. We've seen large banks catering to “preferred” customers to the exclusion of smaller businesses – businesses

that are truly struggling to stay afloat.

For the second round of PPP funding, I pushed to dedicate a significant portion to underserved businesses, including minority and women-owned businesses, and businesses without an established relationship with a big bank. We succeeded in setting aside \$60 billion, out of \$310 billion, for these businesses to bank through small and community-based lenders.

Getting unprecedented amounts of funding out the door hasn't been without implementation problems – and we're pushing federal agencies to get funding where it needs to go fast.

But, New Mexico is seeing real dollars flow in. State government and local municipalities will share \$1.25 billion. Over \$226 million has gone to hundreds of hospitals and healthcare facilities. We'll receive over \$84 million for education and \$6.5 million for testing.

Congress' work is far from done. I remain committed to working around the clock to keep New Mexicans safe and financially secure, and to coming out on the other end a stronger nation.

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FROM OUR U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Fighting for New Mexico's Small Businesses, Pushing for Increased SBA Transparency

BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
XOCHITL TORRES SMALL

I'm fighting for our small businesses to get the federal relief they deserve.

Over the past two to three weeks, despite hundreds of billions of dollars being loaned by the SBA (Small Business Administration), there are still too many small mom and pop businesses in southern New Mexico who haven't received relief and are worried if they ever will.

After Congress passed the first round of relief for small businesses through the bipartisan CARES Act, I stayed in close contact. It was clear an undue number of New Mexican small businesses were crowded out by larger business with more access and familiarity with the SBA system.

In an effort to prevent this from happening again, I fought to ensure that the latest round of relief funding, which started last week, dedicated money to small and community lenders that traditionally serve our rural areas and smallest businesses. I'm proud to report the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, which President Trump signed into law on April 23, 2020, included a dedicated \$60 billion within the PPP for community lenders, more than \$50 billion to expand EIDL, and expanded EIDL eligibility to include our farmers and ranchers.

Applications for PPP reopened on Monday, April 27th with replenished funding from this legislation. Following this



**TORRES
SMALL**

application open, I hosted another call with dozens of small business owners, chambers of commerce, and economic development councils from across central and southern New Mexico. It's clear, to make sure our community receives the relief needed, U.S. Treasury and SBA must increase transparency and accountability of their PPP, specifically by disclosing which businesses have received loans.

Congress passed legislation to help our small businesses who are the backbones of our local economies, not big corporations. It's time for the SBA to show New Mexican taxpayers where their money went.

While we work to ensure a fair process and deliver relief, we must also develop an innovative, responsible, and data-driven path forward to gradually reopen our economy and bring people back to work. Investing in the state's testing and tracking capabilities is a crucial component of this to support business owners and protect public health. I will be working alongside our public health officials, local officials, and businesses to make sure we are supporting both.

As we continue to serve those who are hurting, I am continually inspired every day by New Mexicans' kindness, selflessness, and willingness to work together to help their community. There is a long road ahead of us to heal and rebuild our economy. I will be there fighting for you each step of the way.

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How to avoid the Spread of Coronavirus in your Office

BY MARCUS PINTO

The coronavirus is extremely contagious and now poses an imminent threat to the United States. It's been found that it can survive up to nine days on many common surfaces. It's important to make disinfection of these surfaces a priority in every office, due to how many people end up touching them on a regular basis.

I shouldn't have to tell you that if you're feeling symptoms of a cold or flu, you should stay home until you recover. If you are a manager, you should avoid pressuring employees to come to the office when they are sick as well. This is common knowledge, but it doesn't always happen. Similarly, I shouldn't have to stress the importance of handwashing. The majority of infections are transmitted through the hands and despite the constant emphasis placed on handwashing, the majority of people don't effectively wash their hands with soap.

What this means is that even if you only show up to work when you are healthy and you frequently and effectively wash your hands with soap, you are still susceptible to getting sick due to other people's lack of emphasis on hygiene. Think of all the items that are frequently touched in an office. I sit right across from the break room in my office and can count at least five people who have touched the coffee machine this morning. A couple of feet to my right, one of my coworkers is currently showing another coworker something on her phone. We don't think about how others can disrupt our hygiene and easily get us sick, but it happens every day.

This is a great concern during flu season. With coronavirus shaking up the world the way it has, it has to be treated with the highest importance. Research has shown that the coronavirus can survive nine days on surfaces that haven't been disinfected. Door



handles, refrigerator doors and even shopping carts pose a risk. Thank goodness my local grocery store has disinfectant wipes by the entrance for me to wipe the handle of my shopping cart. Even when we are removed from flu season and coronavirus – I don't know who's touched that surface.

In an office, however, there are many people with unknown hand hygiene. Therefore, you should make sure you disinfect

commonly used surfaces. It's been proven that disinfection significantly reduces coronavirus infectivity and is a great way to stay safe. It's better to be a germophobe than to put your health in danger. Many people don't think something serious can happen to them until it does.

Some of the surfaces that many people never think to wash can actually be the most contagious. Surfaces such as keyboards, mice

and tablets typically have more bacteria than a toilet seat. Think about it. If you constantly disinfect your toilet seat but never do anything about the bacteria in your keyboard, what do you expect is going to happen?

What I highly recommend is getting medical-grade, waterproof keyboards and computer mice as well as medical screen protectors for your touchscreens. Seal Shield, an infection prevention company, manufactures all of these products with unique antimicrobial-product protection as well as the ability to withstand harsh cleaning products. Whereas most keyboards, mice and touchscreens get severely damaged by disinfection (frustrating, I know) Seal Shield's devices allow for your office to undergo the same disinfection routines as hospitals if you so desire. Disinfecting the frequently used surfaces in your office can significantly reduce the risk of getting coronavirus for your whole staff.



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