

Resolution No. 110-195
Resolution Supporting the New Mexico Counties
2024 Legislative Priorities

WHEREAS, in August 2023, the New Mexico Counties Board of Directors approved three legislative priorities for consideration by the New Mexico Legislature at its 2024 session; *and*

WHEREAS, NMC has requested that the Board of County Commissioners in each of the state's 33 counties discuss and approve support for NMC's legislative priorities as an important step in assuring maximum understanding of NMC's legislative priorities at the county level; *and*

WHEREAS, county support enables NMC to demonstrate strong local and statewide support to the state legislature for the following issues:

1. HB 2 Appropriations

Detention Reimbursement Fund

Fully fund County Detention Facilities Reimbursement Act Fund to reimburse counties for the actual cost of housing state inmates.

- Currently at \$5 million
- According to the New Mexico Sentencing Commission, the five-year average cost to house New Mexico Corrections Department inmates is \$7.5 million.

Detention Recruitment and Retention

Appropriate \$10 million to the newly formed Corrections Workforce Capacity Building Fund administered by DFA.

- Sufficient numbers of detention staff are essential to a safe and well-operated detention facility which is directly correlated to community safety.
- A public safety recruitment and retention fund would provide local governments with much needed resources to provide detention services to their communities.

Prisoner Transport and Extradition

Create a line item in the DFA budget with \$750,000 to reimburse counties that provide transportation for state prisoners.

- Statute 4-44-18C NMSA requires the state to make such payment.
- Counties should not be responsible to pay for state prisoner extradition.

RISE Funding

Make permanent and increase county participation in the RISE (Reach, Intervene, Support and Engage) Program.

Emergency Medical Services

Create a line item in the Department of Health Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Bureau budget with \$10 million to assist local government EMS services.

- Emergency medical services in New Mexico have been significantly underfunded for years.
- Current state appropriations, taxes collected through local GRT increments, and other sources of revenue do not provide sufficient support to local governments to meet community needs, especially in rural areas of the state.
- EMS services are vital to the health and welfare of New Mexico citizens.

Courthouse Funding

Create a recurring appropriation of \$25 million for construction and renovation of state district courthouses.

- In 2023, the legislature appropriated \$23 million to the Administrative Office of the Courts to assist with critical needs.
- \$15 million was designated to resolve litigation between the 8th Judicial District Court and Otero County and the remaining balance is being distributed based on needs statewide.
- Counties maintain that district courthouses are a state responsibility and that the rising costs of construction, security, and IT necessitate a shared revenue stream.

State Health Benefits Plan

Create a State Health Benefit Fund solvency plan.

- The current State Health Care Benefit Plan is facing an estimated \$149 million deficit.
- The State of New Mexico has not increased premiums in the past three years.
- The General Services Division invoiced local government public bodies (LPB) for approximately \$18 million for previous and projected shortfalls.
- NMC has filed a lawsuit on behalf of 24 counties questioning the legality of these “special assessments.”
- NMC seeks a solution to ensure fund solvency and guarantee proper notice and planning to enable LPBs to adequately budget for increased cost moving forward.

2. Elected Official Salary Increase

Increase the salary cap for newly elected county officials by 15% with a provision for future adjustments to track the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

- Last amended in 2018 (HB69) for increases beginning in 2019.
- Historically adjusted approximately every 4 years.
- Must be in place when newly elected officials take office in 2024.
- CPI provision would eliminate the need for repeated legislative action.

3. Firefighter Recruitment & Retention

Appropriate a \$50 million reoccurring fund to the NM Department of Homeland Security to be administered by the State Fire Marshal's Office for fire departments to staff, recruit, and retain career and volunteer firefighters.

- Call volume has increased by as much as 50% in the last year.
- Response systems are overburdened.
- Average age of New Mexican volunteer is 65.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Sierra Board of County Commissioners does hereby support NMC's legislative priorities as set forth above and urges that legislation incorporating these priorities be enacted by the state legislature during its 2024 session.

ADOPTED this 17th day of October, 2023.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SIERRA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Travis Day, Chairman *T. Day* For / Against

James Paxon, Vice-chair *James E. Paxon* For / Against

Hank Hopkins, Commissioner *Hank Hopkins* For / Against

ATTEST:



Shelly K. Trujillo
Shelly K. Trujillo
Sierra County Clerk