

SUMMARY of 2015 New Mexico Legislature
NM Chiropractors
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When the 2015 Legislature ended at noon on Saturday, Legislators had passed a budget that increased certain areas of government by \$83 million. The 2015/16 budget of \$6.23 billion raises the state budget back to 2007 levels equating to a 1.3% increase overall from the current fiscal year. Education received the bulk of the new money at \$36.6 million while prisons and CYFD received about \$20 million. \$37 million went into the economic development fund (some of those funds were from non-recurring sources). Salary increases were included for new teachers, state police officers and nurses in the Department of Health. Medicaid also received increased funding.

By the 30th day of the session which is the cut off for bill introductions, 626 House bills and 691 Senate bills had been introduced. On Tuesday night of the last week of the Session, only 8 bills had passed both the House and Senate. By Thursday night, 71 bills had moved through both chambers. This is a dramatic reduction from prior years, demonstrating the high level of conflict between the Republican controlled House and the Democratic controlled Senate. As an example of the unique situation in this session, a total of 191 bills passed both chambers by noon on Saturday now on their way to the governor. In the 2013 session, 514 bills, memorials and constitutional amendments had passed and in 2011, 460 bills, etc. had passed both chambers.

The Session ended on a dramatic note, with the Governor's \$260 million capital outlay bill for projects passing the House Saturday morning and going to the Senate for concurrence with just twenty minutes left in the Session. Capital outlay provides funds for buildings, renovations and equipment throughout the State. The Senate debated another bill until the end of the Session running out of time to hear the capital bill. Though the capital outlay bill contained numerous appropriations for an array of programs, the House version had deeply cut community college and university funds as well as senior centers and capital funds for Native American projects. The Senate also disagreed with the capital outlay funding of highways with severance tax bonds rather than non-recurring general funds.

Though the governor has indicated that there will not be a special session to address capital outlay, it is possible that a special session will be necessary in the Fall if natural gas and oil prices continue to decline. If that happens, it is likely across the board budget cuts called "sanding" would be necessary. For example, a 1% across the board cut would generate \$600 million plus or minus in savings depending on which month a special session might occur. Let's hope that oil prices increase enough to keep this from happening.

This session was dramatically different from any other legislative sessions I have experienced. New House leadership created different policies and procedures, as well as all new committees with new names and duties. I actually thought that the new committees enabled legislation to

be divided up quite effectively so no committee had too many bills. The House made an effort to start and end committees on a clear time schedule. It was a significant difference in the schedule to hold the bulk of the House floor sessions in the late afternoon and evening. The Senate functioned as it normally does on its own time schedule. Because there are fewer Senators, the Senate committees have much longer agendas in order to hear all the bills assigned to their committees. Early on in the session, we were in Senate hearings till 10pm or later many evenings.

The reality of politically divided chambers resulted in long hearings on abortion, right to work legislation and immigrant driver's licenses. Both the House and Senate committees had multiple hearings for as long as eight hours on many of these bills. Numerous long hearings prevent other bills from passing. In addition, the House had at least eight three hour floor sessions on every one of these controversial bills. It is unusual for the House to debate this long on one bill during a legislative session much less eight times. The Senate on the other hand, had five attempted "blasts" of the abortion bills, right to work and driver's license bills. Blasts happen after a bill has been tabled in a committee, but members of the Senate try to obtain a majority vote on the floor to pull the bill out of committee to be heard by the full Senate.

All in all it was a very difficult session for legislators, lobbyists, advocates and staff. A tremendous amount of work was required by all with very little "product" in the end.

Legislation:

HB122 Scope of Practice Act – if the governor signs this legislation it will require anyone wanting to change a health care scope of practice to notify the licensing board who will notify the Legislative Council who will assign a review by a legislative committee.

SB220 HMO Credentialing Requirements – this bill promises to make credentialing much easier and quicker.

SB318 Sunset dates – this bill extends the Chiropractic Act till 2022.

SB359 Co Pay Bill – this bill which would reduce copays enabling patients to receive the care they need went further than in past sessions. It passed the Senate, but was tabled in the first House committee.

SB376 Expand Scope of Practice – this bill died in Senate Judiciary.

House bills – 626 (90 passed)

House joint memorials – 21 (3 passed)

House memorials – 134 (109)

House joint resolutions – 20 (1 passed)

Senate bills – 691 (101)

Senate joint memorials – 29 (8 passed)

Senate memorials – 139 (88 passed)

Senate joint resolutions – 19 (2 passed)

Total bills passed – 191