

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release
Contact: Arnold Vigil, (505) 986-4263
www.nmsenate.com

SENATE REVIEW: March 13, 2013

Pair of Passed Bills Address Problem of Doping Race Horses

The Senate unanimously passed a bill Wednesday that would increase the penalties levied on licensed race horse owners or trainers who violate the rules of the state Horse Racing Act. Senate Bill 444, sponsored by Senate President Tempore Mary Kay Papen, will substantially increase the fines up to \$100,000 or the total of a winning purse, whichever is greater.

“I carried this because we need to do a better job,” said Senator Papen (Dona Ana, District 38). An investigative report last year by the “New York Times” pointed out that many racehorses in New Mexico were being given performance enhancing drugs by their handlers at five of the state’s larger horseracing tracks.

The bill, which cites that drugging a horse is a fourth degree felony, complements Senate Bill 72, also sponsored by Senator Papen, which previously passed the Senate. SB 72 calls for a stricter regimen of drug testing for racehorses administered by the State Racing Commission and also amends the state Horse Racing Act to establish a racehorse testing fund. Both passes bills add serum and plasma samples to the list of test criteria performed upon active racehorses.

SB 72 stipulates that two samples be taken from a racehorse to test for “unauthorized drugs, chemicals, stimulants, depressants or other foreign substances not naturally occurring in a horse.” One sample would be sent for testing to a State Racing Commission laboratory or one of its choice and the other would be sent to the scientific laboratory division of the Department of Health.

Both bills specify that the laboratories shall meet or exceed national standards for such testing as established by the Association of Racing Commissioners International, Inc. Starting in 2015, the Racehorse Testing Fund would be financed by a portion of the daily capital outlay tax levied

on the daily handle at both Class A and B tracks. The State Fair Commission would finance the fund before that through capital outlay appropriations to the state fairgrounds.

Bill to Add Penny Tax on Gallon of Gas to Finish U.S. 491 Passes Senate

On a vote of 23-12, the Senate passed a bill Wednesday that would add one cent a gallon to the New Mexico gasoline tax, including fuel sold on Native American lands, to complete the construction of a four-lane U.S. 491 between Gallup and Shiprock.

Senate Bill 600, sponsored by Senator John Pinto (McKinley, San Juan, District 3) also stipulates that the tax will sunset in 15 years. The highway, which was once designated as U.S. 666 and often referred to as the “Devil’s Highway,” not only because of its numeral designation but also because of its statistical history of being one of the most dangerous highways in New Mexico, is still just two lanes in many stretches.. The bill heads to the House for review.

Senate Passes Memorial to Re-designate N.M. 333 as Historic Route 66

The Senate unanimously passed a memorial on Wednesday that calls for the state to look into the re-designation of N.M. 333 as “Historic United States Route 66.”

“My parents met on Route 66, they had their first date, and here I am today,” Senator Michael Padilla (Bernalillo, District 14) said during his introduction on the floor of Senate Memorial 51, Restore Historic Route 66, which passed on Wednesday. “I believe that re-identifying many of these intermittent sections of Highway 333 will revitalize many of the smaller communities along its path and give them an excellent economic boost.”

The memorial requests that the governor, the Department of Transportation, the Tourism Department and New Mexico’s congressional delegation work to achieve the re-designation of the state highway, which many sections are difficult to find today. A fiscal impact report points out that statewide business and residents benefit from the sections designated as Route 66.

During the debate of the memorial, many senators joined in during unanimous, bipartisan praise of the historic highway, which brought up many memories, including those of the conservative Senator Sander Rue (R, Bernalillo, District 23), who admitted to the body that he once ran with a wild group of boys and the biggest regret of his life was selling his 1966 Chevrolet Corvette.

Route 66 once stretched the entire east-west borders of the state from Tucumcari to Gallup and parts of it even appeared in the movie, "The Grapes of Wrath," among other films. In 1926, the U.S. government began connecting sections of multi-state roads between Chicago and Los Angeles to create a continuous east-west route.

At the time there were only a patchwork of developed roads that formed the highway and many sections of roads in New Mexico were strung together to form the route, which eventually evolved into the true east-west path we know today. Sometimes the patchwork didn't always take an east-west path and as new roads were developed, some of the older roads lost their "66" designation.

When the continuous east-west Interstate 40 came into being in the mid-1960s, many sections of Route 66, like N.M. 333, became state highways or frontage roads off the interstate. Some of the sections have since been re-designated as "Historic Route 66" and attract international tourists year-round.

Bullet Proof Vests for Police Dogs Now Easier for Law Enforcement to Purchase

Governor Susana Martinez office announced to the Senate on Wednesday that she signed into law a bill that will allow law-enforcement agencies throughout the state the ability to purchase protective vests and other safety equipment for police dogs.

Senate Bill 141, sponsored by Senator Howie Morales (Catron, Grant Socorro, District 28) previously passed the Senate on a on a vote of 39-0, and the House 65-2. The law changes the purpose of the Law Enforcement Fund to include buying the safety equipment for the police dogs, including bullet-proof vests.

New Mexico Works Act Passes House, Goes to Governor's Desk

The House of Representatives on Wednesday unanimously passed the New Mexico Works Act, which includes capital outlay infrastructure and improvement projects for schools, senior centers, courts, roads, water-treatment and sewer systems, community centers and parks, and more. The bill will go to the governor for her signature; she has the authority to line-item veto capital outlay projects.

"Capital outlay is a collaborative effort from the Legislature, state departments and agencies, as well as the Legislative Council Service," said Senate Majority Floor Leader Michael S. Sanchez

(Bernalillo, Valencia, District 29). “This is a bipartisan effort; each legislator has invested a lot of time in this process in order to best benefit our communities.

“The most important thing about capital outlay is the potential to truly revitalize our construction industry and create jobs throughout the state.”

State government departments, public and higher education institutions, and local entities requested a total of \$1.4 billion dollars in capital outlay, an amount much higher than the net capacity of bonds sold.

The bill includes an aggregate \$222.4 million from Severance Tax Bonds from the Severance Tax Permanent Fund, which is comprised of severance taxes collected on natural resources extracted from New Mexico lands. It also includes \$51.2 million from other state funds, including the Miners Trust Fund, the Public School Capital Outlay Fund, the Public Project Revolving Fund, the State Land Maintenance Fund, the Game and Fish Bond Retirement Fund and the Game Protection Fund.

Capital outlay requests in the bill include: \$28.1 million to the Public Education Department; \$19.7 million to the Department of Environment; approximately \$2 million to the State Fair Commission; \$12.45 million to the Department of Game and Fish; \$570,000 to the State Land Office; \$7 million to the Secretary of State for election-related technology; \$3 million to the Spaceport Authority for an access road; \$1.5 million to the Taxation and Revenue Department; and approximately \$41 million to the Higher Education Department and to New Mexico public universities

To see all proposed capital outlay projects by agency, click:

<http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/13%20regular/capitaloutlays/Chart%20by%20Agency%20A%20SB60.pdf>

To see all proposed capital outlay projects by county, click:

<http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/13%20regular/capitaloutlays/Chart%20by%20County%20A%20SB60.pdf>

In other (mostly) Senate action:

* “I don’t understand why you can’t support this, my good friend John Arthur Smith supported this and he is more conservative than all of you put together,” said Representative Henry “Kiki” Saavedra (D, Bernalillo, District 10) to House Republicans who took issue with the Senate amendments to House Bill 2, the \$5.9 billion budget bill, during a concurrence vote on Wednesday that passed 37-33. The bill awaits the governor’s pen.

* “Mr. President, I request unanimous consent to have the Pope’s confirmation sent to the Rules Committee,” said Senator William Payne (Bernalillo, District 20) during announcements Wednesday on the Senate floor (just minutes before the selection of the new Pope was officially announced, unbeknownst to the senators, after many days of anticipation).

* “Senator, I’ve been called Madam President for two years now, so being called ‘Your Honor’ is quite ok,” Lt. Governor John Sanchez’s reply to Senator Lisa Torracco (R, Bernalillo, District 18) after she apologized for mistakenly referring to him as “Your Honor” during Wednesday’s debate of House Bill 299, Tax Administration Act Changes, which passed unanimously.

* “I hope you don’t have any bills going through judiciary,” Lt. Governor John Sanchez to fellow Republican, Senator Cliff Pirtle (Chavez Eddy Otero, District 32) after the freshman senator proudly boasted that the Roswell Coyotes beat the Espanola Sundevils by double figures Wednesday in the state basketball tournament. The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Richard Martinez (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Santa Fe, District 5), is a proud and vocal resident of the Espanola area.