

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For Immediate release

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Television Ad Urges Governor to Support Film Jobs

Local film makers don't want to go down without a fight, so they're rallying their constituency, especially those who rely on film income, to call the governor and urge her to sign House Bill 379, the Film Production Tax Credit Increase, or what has become to more commonly known as the "Breaking Bad" bill.

As part of the outreach, phone calls are being placed to tens of thousands of registered voters and a rapid-response TV commercial is being run during the state basketball tournaments this week and weekend as well as on other media outlets around the state.

Jon Hendry, Business Agent for IATSE Local 480, said, "It's not about us. We're highly skilled technicians who will find a way to survive and prosper; if not in New Mexico then somewhere in the greater film community. It's about the hotel and restaurant workers, the car rental agents, the construction yard worker, and most importantly the high school students who want to stay in New Mexico to pursue their careers."

The Governor needs to know she's affecting tens of thousands of our kids' futures if she doesn't sign this bill." Contact Jon Hendry at (505) 670-7381.

A preview of the TV commercial is available here:

http://m.youtube.com/#/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=9etUIhLIJ5M&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D9etUIhLIJ5M%26feature%3Dyoutu.be

Conference Committee reaches consensus on PRC qualifications

A Conference Committee was called on Senate Bill 8, a result of non-concurrence on amendments made to the bill by the House. Conference Committee members included Senate Majority Whip Tim Keller (Bernalillo, District 17), Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25),

Senator Bill Payne (R, Bernalillo, District 20), Representative Emily Kane (D, Bernalillo, District 15), Representative Tom Taylor (R, San Juan, District 1), and Representative Paul Bandy (R, San Juan, District 3).

In a meeting Thursday night, the committee selected co-chairs Senator Tim Keller and Representative Paul Bandy. The six-member, bipartisan group of legislators tentatively agreed on the following requirements for candidates for PRC: 10 years work experience in a field related to regulated industries or; a combination of 10 years work experience in a field related to regulated industries and related education resulting in a degree,

The committee also agreed that PRC members would be required to fulfill a minimum 40 hours of continuing education each year. The committee adjourned and will meet in the Senate Lounge at 10 a.m., Friday, March 15, to review the changes and is expected to vote. The meeting is open to the public.

Medicaid Bill Helps Inmates Continue With Treatment Coverage on the Outside

A Senate bill on the governor's desk will ensure that inmates held in jails, prisons, and Children, Youth and Families Department facilities for 30 days or more have access to Medicaid applications so they have health care coverage when they are released.

Senate Bill 65, sponsored by Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino (Bernalillo, District 12), passed the House on Wednesday by a 49-14 bipartisan vote after unanimously passing the Senate. The legislation also calls for the suspension, rather than termination, of Medicaid coverage of inmates already enrolled.

Upon the governor's signature, "Pre-release Medicaid for Incarcerated Persons" will become effective on January 1, 2014, to coincide with new eligibility rules for Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act recently endorsed by Governor Susana Martinez. More than 90 percent of adult inmates will then be eligible for Medicaid, compared with the current number of enrollees at less than 10 percent. The federal government will pay 100 percent of the health care costs for new enrollees for three years and no less than 90 percent, thereafter. Most of the technical and administrative cost to enroll inmates will also be covered by Medicaid.

"This is a great opportunity for New Mexico to build on Governor Martinez's plan to expand Medicaid to poor, single adults," said Senator Ortiz y Pino. "We can join other states that have done this for inmates and see reduced recidivism and improved public safety, decreased overcrowding of correctional institutions, substantial financial savings, and more humane

treatment for the many people who find themselves incarcerated as a result of untreated mental-health and substance-use disorders.”

Representative Antonio “Moe” Maestas (D, Bernalillo, District 16), who carried the bill on the House side, added, “This is such an important opportunity to help people, who have been in trouble, get their lives back on track by linking them to the medical, mental health and addiction services they need upon being freed.”

Medicaid does not cover costs for treatment inmates receive in correctional institutions, but it covers costs for hospitalization at outside medical facilities. If Medicaid is only suspended, it can easily be billed for outside treatment, thus easing the burden on state and county indigent funds and saving millions.

There is strong support for this bill amongst correctional officials throughout the state and is supported 'in concept' by the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD), whose officials would prefer to implement this policy incrementally. The Health Department’s plans will exclude county jails and facilities that confine New Mexico's troubled youth, incarcerating thousands of New Mexicans with untreated mental-health and substance-abuse disorders.

“The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has long encouraged states to suspend rather than terminate enrollment,” said Craig Acorn, a senior attorney at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty. “They have directed states to ensure that eligible inmates are reconnected to health care coverage upon release.

“We encourage Governor Martinez to sign this bill and remain consistent with her support for Medicaid expansion, fiscal responsibility, and addressing the state’s drug-overdose crisis and crime reduction.”

University of New Mexico drug policy analyst Harris Silver, MD, said, “Never again will there be an opportunity to have legislation that breaks the vicious cycle of untreated substance use and mental-health disorders and incarceration at such a low cost. Not only will this approach markedly reduce the overdose rate in our state -- the highest in the nation -- but also it will save at least \$40 million in state and county funds annually.

“There is no need for a gradual approach when the evidence of the benefit of doing this now is well-known. Lives are at stake.”

Bill Raises Eligibility Limit for Public-Sector Attorney Loan Repayments

The House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 349, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25), which will change the income requirements for public attorneys who can receive loan repayments through the Public Service Law Loan Repayment program.

Currently, to be eligible, an attorney must earn less than \$45,000 annually. entry-level attorneys at the state Public Defender's Office start at \$47,800 and are ineligible for loan repayment assistance. SB 349 will raise the eligibility to \$55,000.

"SB 349 encourages new lawyers to become public-service attorneys," Senator Wirth said. "New Mexico needs high-quality attorneys in the public sector to assist people in our state who, unfortunately, cannot afford legal counsel."

The Higher Education Department says that there is money available for this measure. The bill awaits the governor's pen.

In other Senate Action:

* "I don't want Senator McSorley to fall over, but I am in full support of this memorial," Senator William Sharer (R, San Juan, District 1) said Thursday just before the Senate unanimously passed Senate Joint Memorial 45, sponsored by Senator Richard Martinez (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Santa Fe, District 5). The memorial requests the establishment of a working group to look into using the historic Los Luceros property north of Espanola for a recovery center that will focus on at-risk youth, foster children and young mothers.

"Is there any way we can give Amtrak the RailRunner," Senator George Munoz (Cibola, McKinley, San Juan, District 4) said to Senator Peter Wirth (Santa Fe, District 25), during Thursday's passing of Senate Memorial 3. The memorial will urge the governor and the state's Congressional delegation to influence the federal government to financially support the continuation of the Amtrak's historic Southwest Chief passenger-train service, which an estimated 112,000 people used in 2012, getting on and off in Albuquerque, Lamy, Las Vegas and Raton.

A 2012 newspaper story said that Amtrak requested a combined \$100 million from the states of New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas to repair tracks owned by Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe in Kansas. Otherwise, the railroad indicated it would be forced bypass the historical route through New Mexico.

* “If it’s litigated, then that’s economic opportunity for some groups,” Senator John Arthur Smith (Dona Ana, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, District 35) said during the debate of SM 3, while referring to the pending agreement for the state to purchase the train tracks between Raton and Lamy from BNSF.

* “If you’d just be a liberal you wouldn’t have these feelings of guilt or bi-polar ... ,” Senator Cisco McSorley (Bernalillo, District 16) said in response to Senator Smith’s comments to Senator Wirth about the sections of state-owned railroad track during the SM 3 debate.

* “Standardized testing is a death sentence for anyone with dyslexia,” Senator Tim Keller (Bernalillo, District 17) said while recalling his own childhood struggles with the learning disability during the Senate’s unanimous passing Wednesday of Senate Memorial 74, National Dyslexia Awareness Month, sponsored by Senate Majority Floor Leader Michael S. Sanchez (Bernalillo, Valencia, District 29).