

**Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy
Policy & Advocacy Action Team
6.25.20 ♦ 12:00 – 1:00 pm
Meeting Notes**

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Pam Roy
- Emily Wildau
- Carlos Navarro
- Sherry Hooper
- Rep. Melanie Stansbury
- Jonas Moya
- Trista Teeter managing director of Food is Free abq.

Carlos was listening watching the LFC.

Pam – also listening watching –LFC’s recommendations. Also kept an eye out on introduction of HB 1 and SB5 and supplementals, and what’s on governor’s desk unless she signed them this morning. Doesn’t want to report out until the governor signs. Had a conversation with Sec. Witte. If there are changes,

Emily said that there was a lot of focus on what they were cutting from the budget, and what might come in January. She said it will be interesting how using CARES funding in the future shakes out. National Kids Count Data Book came out on Monday.

Derek said he was following developments affecting Medicaid.

Sherry said she was not able to listen in. She held many conversations with legislators before the special session and is awaiting the outcomes.

Rep. Stansbury said when they were watching conversations about absentee voting they didn’t get to hear much about food and ag issues.

Lilly said that they had been combing through the 70+ pages from House and Senate and were able to track issues including those affecting food & agriculture such as the Food and Ag budget, Cooperative Extension, and the food and ag stations at NMSU. Interesting to note there was a \$500k reduction for Natural Resources Resource Fund, \$10 million reduction for Interstate Stream Program, and \$1 million reduction in another program. She said it was striking. She was curious about how reductions to LEDA will affect agriculture. The other big thing was buried in HB1. They were speaking about anticipating cuts and said they might have to double the sanding if the revenue didn’t match reductions. They built in within possibilities of the cuts being doubled. They were making some very difficult decisions.

Rep. Stansbury said they had been briefed 6 weeks in advance and it didn’t really sink in until the HAFC meeting the day before the session. She said she thought they did a great job. The premise they operated on was “do as little harm as possible.” The solvency project for the budget under best case scenario was that we would be down \$600



NEW MEXICO FIRST
People. Ideas. Progress.

Please contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

million from FY 21 level. Schools, higher ed and Medicaid said, “if we take credit for that money we’re still going to have an operational shortfall.” From LFC and financial standpoint, their constitutional duty was to balance the spreadsheet. If we end up in a bad situation, such as a \$2.4 billion loss next year, additional shaving and emergency measures will be triggered. Rep. Stansbury said that the teachers’ and public workers unions came in on the final negotiation so they put in a 1% raise for teachers and public workers. (Colorado ended up eviscerating programs to balance their budget.) They were clear – if the economy doesn’t recover in the fall, in January we’re going to have to cut everything.

- She added regarding the policy fact sheet, the time is now to talk to Debbie Romero and the agencies about the fact sheet. Now is the time to put pressure on HSD, PED and all the programs to not take those cuts out of the new programs, because that’s how they’re going to want to take the cuts first. They have total discretion now.
- Pam thanked Rep. Stansbury for everything she and her colleagues did and for being willing to take the group’s requests and share them out. To make sure that any sanding is done equitably at Dept of Ag and that no programs are dropped totally.
- Rep. Stansbury recommended holding a meeting with Chancellor Arbizu and rest of leadership at NMSU. The way the LFC framework took credit for federal aid negatively affected higher ed. When there is a loss in revenue stream through the education formula, they will hold back programs. The challenge is that the NMSU leadership and provost will take money out of ag for other programs. She recommended meeting with the chancellor as soon as possible. She wasn’t sure that he was hearing enough advocacy from the ag community.
- Pam said that Sec. Witte said he needed to also have those conversations with NMSU. She wondered about having the conversation with Chancellor Arbizu separately or with the secretary? Rep. Stansbury said she thought it was likely to be a series of conversations. She was happy to reach out to Dr. Arbizu. Secretary Witte would be invited as a participant. These are real needs that have implications for food in NM. Sec. Witte does not have authority for his budget without going through their gatekeeper.
- Lilly noted that there are layers in the decision making. Rep. Stansbury added that the entire political dynamic is in total chaos right now. They lost 7 members during the primary, with chairman John Arthur Smith leaving. From the last session, the Ag omnibus bill, because there were legislators advocating for it, indicated to Rep. Stansbury that there is an ability to advocate on the House side. The roadblocks were on the Senate side. The dynamics are different now. She said it was important to hit while the iron was hot. Putting this on their radar now, tee-ing up that we want to do some big structural food policy this year. Dr. Arbizu calls himself a STEM evangelist, will be interested in innovation in structural food issues.
- Lilly wondered how the group could be helpful. Rep. Stansbury wrote an email on the spot to start the ball rolling.

Trista Tester said that Foodistry ABQ is a local gleaning project in its 7th year of harvesting. Working with farmers, orchardists. Forgotten food that falls on the ground and becomes wasted. Valuable resource. Get it to shelters, clinics, as many places as they can. They encourage social empowerment through growing and sharing of fresh food. Even more good by partnering with others and making changes through policy. Want to offer insights, data, any way to help to get these policies changed.



Jonas shared news that he will be transitioning to executive director at NM Cattle Growers Association. He said the work would continue and he will be wearing a different hat. He'll be looking at how Cattle Growers can push the work forward that the group has been doing.

Updates

Sherry said she was joining the gleaning group that would be meeting soon. She is doing outreach to bring others into the group. Another group was looking into school food waste. Having done quite a bit of research about what other school districts have done and talking to food service directors, thought that the plan will be different than what she had expected initially. The idea will be to prevent waste and to get food to people who need it. She is understanding that some of the issues are that children don't have enough time to eat their lunch. Handheld foods are good. One will be to help farmers find markets, and to get produce that would be ploughed under to people who need it.

Derek said at Voices for Children, they take a holistic look at health and realize that social determinants are affected in terms of outcomes. Trying to close unemployment gap. There are many uninsured. When people need coverage they won't have access. Want to make coverage more affordable. A big portion of 180,000 uninsured need to be able to afford healthcare on the exchange. Looking into health care affordability. Holistic approach to make sure families have all their needs met.

Rep. Stansbury: this session is a different kettle of fish than the last sessions. Whereas in last 2 sessions the objectives were about new and expanding programs, she said she would focus on 2 things for upcoming session:

- An overarching policy framework focused on addressing structural issues around ag sector, getting food to market, and systemic hunger. She said she would advise the more we can put it in one bill as an ag/food omnibus the better. She said things have evolved – to put together substantive policy together. Separately the focus on budget will be on realignment. “All these budgets are going to get cut. All of them.”
- Rep. Stansbury said we were in uncharted territory. She predicted it would be at the discretion of the chairs. She recommended lobbying the appropriate committee and let them know we plan to do a big food/ag bill. That would be natural resources and ag. She thought Cervantes might still be chair. McClean and Lente were co-chairs. Carlos thought health and human services – Rep. Stansbury thought it more likely to get on their agenda. She suggested looping in Lente, Stefanics and especially getting bicameral leadership versed in the issues, as well as briefing the newcomers. Try to get on the agenda for human services and need to prepare ideas to present. Carlos said they would talk to Rep. Ferrary about the hunger caucus. Rep. Stansbury said, it was a few people and didn't exist as a body yet. She said any of them could make a request to the chairs.
- Lilly wondered about etiquette – ask HHS first, then go to Natural Resources and Ag? Rep. Stansbury replied that you have to lobby to get on an interim committee. Her experience is that the HHS agenda was a little more open. Everyone should be approached but there was more likelihood to get on the agenda. She said, put in a request to everybody and put attention on HHS.
- Pam said in that usually by end of June there are work plans available. She wanted to clarify – legislative council staff had said to her that they were still focusing on who would be on the committees. Chairs and vice chairs were being selected, and work plans were not yet being made public. Rep. Stansbury said Stefanics was now chair and she would definitely put it on the agenda.

- Rep. Stansbury said the governing body hasn't even decided what to do with the interim yet. Until the legislative leadership decides, we don't know. But reaching out to leadership now was a good idea, she confirmed.
- Lilly said we didn't get a warm fuzzy response about an appropriation. She wondered if there had been more serious talk about the nitty gritty mechanics of how food banks and pantries would share in the relief dollars.

Mag said, "It's pretty much go figure it out yourself." She said it had been months of that. "We haven't even begun to see the depths of the need." It's really discouraging. We'll make as much as we can happen. She said they would stretch the dollars. They have to stretch them to feed as many people as they can. They will make the decisions to find the product they need. "We're literally, basically, on our own."

Sherry added that legislators she spoke to before the session said they would do what they could to help. Her impression is that legislators were overwhelmed once the session started. She agreed that it was disappointing. She and Mag had a meeting with funders the following week. She said when you go through a disaster, people are responsive at the beginning of the disaster. She added that people are not wearing masks and they are seeing a surge around the country. Even in the Santa Fe area medical personnel are seeing a surge although it might not be as extreme as in other states. She is concerned about the future.

- Lilly wondered how the group could help the food banks.
- Mag said that they needed more facetime to make meetings happen and be meaningful. They cannot know how to use stimulus funds without leadership telling them. Help us help everybody else. We know what our limited budgets are and what our capacity is. Sherry agreed that they are happy to do what they need to do. Mag said, "We need to know what the secret handshake is."
- Lilly said she would be in touch with Mag and Sherry very soon.