

**It Is Time to Make a Decision;  
What Will New Mexico Do?  
By Senator Pete Campos**

Each member of the New Mexico Legislature and the governor want all of New Mexico and each New Mexican to thrive, but we have different ideas about how to best repair our economy, keep millennials in New Mexico and attract retirees to our state.

In the simplest terms, some policymakers believe that we've cut state spending as much as is possible and it is time to raise revenue and invest in education, public safety and jobs programs. Others believe that New Mexico has spent too much money over the years and needs to further cut spending and taxes to encourage businesses to come to New Mexico.

Policymakers on each side of that question, including the governor, sincerely want what is best for their fellow New Mexicans and believe that their position is the path to prosperity. We come to Santa Fe with a plan but must now accept the reality that our absolutist positions will not prevail.

The policymaking process demands compromise. We can take the first steps toward restoring and revamping government services; strengthening our economy by investing in ourselves through education, health and anti-poverty programs; and protecting our communities with common-sense public safety programs.

The budget and tax package under consideration by the Senate sets a high standard for a lean, efficient government that reflects our values and protects the state's most vulnerable residents. The plan closes tax loopholes and modernizes our tax code instead of raising personal income or gross receipts tax rates; it begins to restore funding to critical public education, health and safety programs without expanding state government bureaucracy; and, like any good compromise, it leaves no one victorious or vanquished.

The question now is whether this proposal will be accepted for what it is — the best that policymakers can do given the realities we face — or whether it will be rejected by those who favor politically palatable solutions that are unachievable.

It is critical that we choose the first path.

We must change the way we do things in New Mexico by setting aside desires for political advantage in favor of compromises that give New Mexico's people and economy a

fighting chance. We must repair New Mexico's economy and create a tax system that is fair and progressive, easing the tax burden on those who can least afford to pay; simple, so individuals and small business owners can easily comply; efficient, so it does not influence buying or business decisions; and adequate, so that government can provide essential services.

The Senate budget package ensures stability in state government, reaffirms New Mexico's commitment to being business friendly and supports economic growth across the state, not just in the Rio Grande corridor.

A financially healthy and academically strong public education system – beginning with early childhood education and in-home visits and continuing through post-graduate programs – is the key to New Mexico's long-term success. Good schools will help students throughout their lives and provide businesses with the talented, motivated workforce that they crave and need to thrive. The budget we approve this year must support public education above all else.

Health care is also important for New Mexico's success. The health care industry is one of the few bright spots in New Mexico's economy, bolstered by increased Medicaid spending, something that has had bipartisan support. A strong health care system is important to individual New Mexicans' well-being, critical not only to their own physical and mental health, but also to a family's and community's well-being.

Public safety, which includes not just law enforcement but also all of our judicial, correctional and reintegration programs, is essential to protect our homes, neighborhoods and communities from vandalism, burglaries and violent crimes. Safe communities are not only attractive places to live and raise a family, but are also enticing places to expand or relocate a business.

Finally, it's the first step in a plan to increase our reserves to 5 percent in three years and 10 percent in five years, which will ensure that our bond rating will remain high and move higher.

The Senate budget package, developed after extensive hearings, reflects not only the state's needs and values but also our commitment to government efficiency and accountability, both being critical to restoring public confidence in government.

It is time to choose policy over politics to get New Mexico back on track.