

**2018 Session Preview for the *Las Vegas Optic*
By Senator Pete Campos**

As the new year commences, we look to the upcoming legislative session with optimistic caution. Despite a modest increase in state revenue outlook, the budget must address growing state and local needs, federal tax changes and the need for gradual tax modernization. We will approach the 2018 legislative session with a delicate balance of spending, investing, saving and vision-building for the future. We will prioritize the state budget to address people's real needs, reinvigorating our residents' confidence and role in our future economy. The legislature will focus heavily on mental health, public safety, benefits to our elderly, child protective services and health services for underserved communities. We will seek to stabilize the state's revenue to allow for more strategic and long-term planning. I will work hard during the session to improve the lives of constituents in our senate district, which includes areas of Las Vegas, Santa Rosa and Mora County.

Continuing our commitment to improve the education and well-being of our children, we will work toward quality public education, human services programs and Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) programs that complement each other and better incorporate federally funded Head Start programs. We will provide holistic services for the youth in our communities to better prepare them for entry into tomorrow's workforce. I also intend to work with my colleagues to improve public safety across the state by investing in operations and training centers so that law enforcement, emergency medical technicians, firefighters and other first responders can more effectively communicate, train and operate.

New Mexico benefits greatly when all branches of government work together. Although there appears to be consensus between the legislature and the governor, we recognize the difficulty in allocating available state resources. It is crucial to establish a more reliable revenue stream by expanding the revenue-generating load among more stakeholders and alleviating the state's dependence on gross receipts tax, personal income tax and oil and gas revenues. Additionally, major goals for the 2018 legislative session will include replenishing numerous specialty fund reserves, raising reserve levels and closing tax loopholes. The potential targeted tax reform package may address tax pyramiding, internet sales, motor vehicle excise tax and

gross receipts tax on hospitals, with the ultimate goal of increasing state revenue without increasing taxes.

The proposed state budget for 2018 will benefit northeastern New Mexicans in many ways — public employee compensation will increase 1.5%, with additional targeted compensation for prison guards, nurses and social workers; state equalization guarantee and teacher compensation will increase for public schools in Las Vegas, west Las Vegas, Mora and Santa Rosa; New Mexico Highlands University and Luna Community College will receive increases in funding through our capital outlay process; the New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute at Las Vegas, the CYFD and law enforcement will receive an increase in funding; and Medicaid funding will also be increased.

I will further seek to improve the highways in San Miguel County through a highway construction and improvements bill that will be voted on as a general obligation bond in the amount of \$50 million. I will work diligently to improve our information technology systems within the region so that students have the best connectivity at school, medical facilities have the best technology systems to deliver real-time and efficient health care to patients and small businesses can operate with efficient accountability systems. I will target funding and provide support to the advocates who are addressing the addiction epidemic that is devastating our communities. I will also support an increase to tourism and economic development budgets that will benefit Las Vegas, Santa Rosa and Mora County.

In regard to the many projects being developed in San Miguel County, it is important to thoughtfully coordinate a strategic, master and business plan to ensure that all new projects serve the basic safety and well-being needs of the public, create new or sustain existing jobs and address issues such as liability, utilities, payroll and outcomes of the project. We will work together, plan well, remain aware of potential funding sources, leverage our resources and maximize the best use of every dollar we invest in the future of San Miguel County.

Overall, we will work as a unified legislative body to establish stability and continuity for efficient and effective services that best serve New Mexicans. We will coordinate economic development ideas, planning, strategies, volunteers and organizations to improve public safety, health, education, jobs and the economy. Through legislative action, we hope that the residents

of New Mexico gain more confidence in these areas and that our youth are enticed to remain in the state, build their careers and raise their families. As always, I believe the best path forward is collaboration, as the more we learn and share with each other, the better we all become. I invite you to visit my website, petecampos.com, for additional insight into my aspirations for northeastern New Mexico and the 2018 legislative session.

(This article was written exclusively for the Las Vegas Optic.)