

New Mexico's Plan to Capitalize on Our Diverse and Abundant Energy Sources
by Senator Pete Campos

It has been said that a goal without a plan is just a wish. When it comes to New Mexico's collective energy economy, one might describe the last decade more as wishful thinking than as deliberate planning and execution. While New Mexico is blessed with both renewable and traditional energy sources in abundance, for many years the state did not have a plan to strengthen and stabilize the energy-based economy, causing us to be vulnerable to global decisions.

Fortunately, more and more New Mexicans recognize the state's economic potential through energy development and have coalesced around the goal of becoming an energy leader by wisely developing all our energy sources. In 2016, New Mexico took its first step toward that goal when the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) received a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to define priorities and strategies over the next decade to strengthen New Mexico's energy economy through the development of a statewide energy roadmap.

To support the energy roadmap's collaborative creation, the Legislature unanimously passed Senate Joint Memorial 21 in 2017, which encouraged all state agencies to partner with the EMNRD and provide it with pertinent information to develop the plan.

In order to engage stakeholders beyond state agencies, the EMNRD, in partnership with the nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy organization New Mexico First, brought together dozens of energy stakeholders. These stakeholders include a diverse group of individuals representing private and public employment, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, renewable and traditional energy companies, and consumers and providers of energy. Over the course of six months, these stakeholders came together for a four-part series of discussions focusing on how to support all of New Mexico's energy industries so that the state's energy economy will be resilient to global changes. The collective thought was that the best policies emerge when a broad range of views, even opposing ones, are brought together. Maximizing the economic effectiveness of solar, wind, natural gas and oil to provide statewide economic growth, while taking care of our land and water, requires a shared commitment by all stakeholders.

It was through these bipartisan and cross-pollinating discussions that the plan essentially wrote itself. Leadership at the EMNRD thoughtfully recognized that the plan's long-term success relies heavily on the stakeholders themselves, because the implementation of the statewide energy roadmap will span the administrations of at least three governors. By January of this year, the more than 70 participants had created an actionable 10-year plan — the New Mexico Energy Roadmap — outlining ambitious, but attainable, goals and strategies.

The New Mexico Energy Roadmap consists of 15 goals with accompanying strategies that can be accomplished over the next decade. The goals are categorized into five overarching themes: energy economy diversification; moving energy; transportation; energy efficiency; and workforce and education. The following is a sampling of the 15 goals:

- advance strategies to strengthen New Mexico's overall energy economy by 2027;
- rank in the top 20 states for energy efficiency by 2027;
- by 2020, better align education and training programs at New Mexico's two- and four-year colleges with current and future energy workforce needs;
- reduce emissions from mobile sources by 10 percent by 2027; and
- increase the state's permitted natural gas processing capacity by 15 percent by 2027.

Staff at the EMNRD is transparently tracking and publicly reporting progress of the Energy Roadmap on its website. On July 26, the Legislature and the public will learn even more about the Energy Roadmap, when the EMNRD and New Mexico First will present on the plan's development and its early implementation to the legislative interim Water and Natural Resources Committee in Farmington.

Our state is blessed with diverse and abundant energy sources, and we should celebrate all of them because, in addition to power, they provide well-paying jobs and revenues to operate state and local governments and our schools. New Mexicans can benefit even more from the responsible development of our resources, and we — policymakers and citizens — must continue to openly talk about how best to use these energy resources to improve our economy while protecting our land and water.

I encourage my legislative colleagues and fellow New Mexicans to share in the vision of the New Mexico Energy Roadmap and to help create an even more resilient energy economy for our state.

