

Film: A Starring Role in Our Economy

By Senator Pete Campos

In New Mexico, we are blessed with beautiful weather, incredible natural and historical wonders and a welcoming and diverse culture. Over time, New Mexico has worked to utilize these strengths to develop New Mexico's recognition by the film industry, both nationally and internationally. The time has come for us to triple our commitment to attracting new opportunities and investment in New Mexico. The film industry serves as an important economic driver all across the state, providing jobs to thousands of New Mexicans — from the City of Las Vegas, where New Mexico film was first established, to Roswell; from Alcalde to the Pueblo of Zia; and from Albuquerque, where Netflix recently purchased ABQ Studios, to Las Cruces.

The current \$50 million annual cap on tax credits to production companies and the millions upon millions in backlogged rebates create the perception that we are not meeting our obligation to the industry, when in reality, even during tough economic times, we have supported a New Mexico film crew that has grown from 20 members at its inception to over 3,000 today. This year, legislation is being proposed by both the senate and the house of representatives that would eliminate the rebate incentive cap for the film industry. Additionally, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has expressed support for legislative action that would allocate funds to pay off the backlog, to ease any uncertainty in the minds of film producers that New Mexico is ready for action.

We must continue to support the growth of the film industry in our state. We must continue to foster opportunities on both sides of the cameras (and aisle), so that talented New Mexicans don't have to leave the state to find work. We must also continue to expand film programs and courses at every level to ensure that our students are learning the most current skills and techniques. We must appeal to moviemakers in Latin American and other global markets to form new partnerships. We must make New Mexico the entertainment production state that we set out to make it so that our economy thrives and our robust infrastructure and talented workforce are put to use.

This week, we are celebrating film week, which features panels, presentations and an educators' conference in honor of New Mexico's rich history, exciting present and promising future in the film industry, from rising stars to those who have passed on. In the senate, I have sponsored two memorials to celebrate New Mexico's many years in film. The first, Senate Memorial 71, declaring February 25, 2019 "Film Day", commemorates the prominent New Mexicans, locations and films that are being recognized by the New Mexico film and television hall of fame for their significant contributions to New Mexico film. The second, Senate Memorial 89, commemorates one hundred twenty years of film production in the state and expresses support for the future of the film industry in New Mexico.

Our state is on the cusp of realizing our potential as a hub for feature film and television production and of reaping the rewards of our initiatives. The film

industry continues to look at legislation upon which to build its success and further collaborate with the state. It is imperative that we continue to invest in the film industry for the benefit and long-term investment that our state receives in return. The investment in the film tax credits and other incentives will ensure that New Mexico remains competitive on the national stage.