

Governor hopeful Lujan Grisham visits Gallup over weekend

Written by By Deswood Tome Sun Correspondent
Friday, 08 December 2017 09:22



The democrat sees economic potential in clean energy

Amid her schedule-packed day on Dec. 2, U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-N.M., a candidate for New Mexico governor, stopped in a downtown local business for a “meet and greet” with campaign aids.

Lujan Grisham spent the morning in Ramah at the Eastern Navajo Agency Council to address the eastern Navajo leadership for the 31 chapters.

“I get to meet someone new and see the incredible pride and sense of New Mexicans,” she said of her reason for the visit.

The congresswoman discussed economic strategy with the modest gathering at the Gallup Coffee Company on West Coal Avenue. She also bought coffee for everyone who attended that afternoon.

“This is a race about the economy,” Lujan Grisham said. “I [absolutely] don’t blame the current governor for the 2008 recession. Congress enacted a sequester. I’m equally certain that she didn’t [weigh] into national gas prices.”

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Lujan Grisham was making reference to congress's 2013 budget sequestration to curtail federal spending on discretionary programs to reduce deficit spending. The sequestration responded to previous increases in deficit spending. The deficit was recorded at \$1.4 trillion for fiscal year 2010.

Lujan Grisham sits on the House Budget committee. One of her committee functions is to set annual congressional spending caps for all appropriations.

At the Dec. 2 meet up, Lujan Grisham spoke about her commitment to reversing the present economic downturn in western New Mexico.

"What Gallup identifies as the top five strengths that the state should recognize is the returns on investment are small businesses operating along the I-40 corridor," she said. "Farmers and ranchers are aging out. And local economies need to keep local people here."

Lujan Grisham believes that New Mexico is losing population in part due to graduate students receiving their degrees and leaving for better career options elsewhere. An improved economy, Lujan Grisham said, is what will draw them back.

She also told the gathering about her plan to "jump-start" the economy. She believes that the billion-dollar solution lies in green energy, management of funds, and the film industry.

"Those three things [alone] can give you a billion dollars," she said.

EARNING THROUGH CLEAN ENERGY

Lujan Grisham promoted the development of solar power in New Mexico and wind turbine energy. She pointed out that Clovis, N.M., is the joining point of all three national power grids in the United States. Presently, the three electrical transmission power gridlines operate separately: The western, eastern, and southern interconnections.

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Energy developers in Santa Fe are proposing to combine all three transmissions in Clovis.

Lujan Grisham also acknowledged New Mexico's abundance of oil and gas as well as uranium as a source of potential profit.

"We have a ton of uranium," she said. "There is a great interest on uranium mining. And we want to be invested."

But there are community concerns about what could be environmentally unsafe practices.

"My sense that the local communities recognize the serious environmental impacts," she said. "We wouldn't have to make such draconian choices. I have committed to making New Mexico the lead energy clean state."

Speaking at the meet up, Lujan Grisham prioritized cleaning past un-reclaimed mining activity through partnerships with energy companies, and pointed to Colorado as an example.

She referenced methane, hydraulic fracking, water quality production, and specific drilling issues as areas she will concentrate on as governor.

"Methane mitigation—that's money that goes right back," she said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists methane mitigation as a voluntary, multilateral partnership to reduce methane emissions by abating and recovery to make methane use a clean energy source.

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“Bringing environmental protections and environmental justice that works together to balance, and mitigates risk to oil and gas,” she said. “You don’t create such an imbalance.”

Prioritizing the environment through clean energy could benefit a state that boasts a major tourism industry. Lujan Grisham sees the tourism industry as a strong point in New Mexico’s economy.

“I met with an Albuquerque hotel owner,” she said. “His hotel marketing budget is nearly three times the tourism amount he budgeted from previous years. We have three world heritage sites. There are 20 in the country. Don’t fly to Peru — go to Chaco Canyon.”

Lujan Grisham spent an hour and a half with patrons at the Gallup Coffee Company, speaking individually one on one and with small groups.

The congresswoman’s next scheduled stop was the Shalako ceremonial dances in Company, where she was invited to attend by the Zuni governor.

The congresswoman returned to Washington on the night of Dec. 3.

***By Deswood Tome
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