

## Board of Commissioners approves resolution to oppose Environmental Review Act

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 08 March 2019 10:15

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The McKinley County Board of Commissioners spent several minutes discussing a resolution in opposition to House Bill 206 at a special meeting.

HB 206, which is currently in the House State Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee, provides rulemaking authority to the Environmental Improvement Board and enumerates the powers and duties of lead and cooperating agencies.

The bill, cited as the Environmental Review Act, intends to provide New Mexico with a high-quality environment now and in the future, including wildlife populations and clean air, water, and land.

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It would require government agencies at all levels to consider the qualitative, technical and economic factors of a project that may impact public health, ecosystems and the environment both in the long and short terms.

As of Feb. 27, the bill was reported as “Do Not Pass” by the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, but without a recommendation on the committee substitution.

Commission Chairman Bill Lee described the bill as problematic during the Feb. 27 meeting, adding that it has no fiscal impact listed along with no specified timelines.

Martin O'Malley, general manager of Gallup Land Partners, was present to support the resolution to oppose HB 206.

“[HB 206] adds another layer of requirements that would be a detriment to business owners,” he said during the meeting.

JoAnn Benenati, from Church Rock, said that around 21 county projects are exempt from the Environmental Review Act with upwards of another 20 exemptions being possible.

“It makes no sense for the [improvement board] to act on this because the profits outweigh the costs,” she said.

Benenati added that if HB 206 is enacted, the bill will not go into effect until next year, and that the bill’s rules would have to be enforced by December.

The resolution carried with a 3-0 vote.

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