

N.M. senators on U. S.-Mexico border tour

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A look at border security issues, migrant conditions, ranchers' needs

Three Republican senators and other members of the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee spent Oct. 1-Oct. 4 touring New Mexico's border with Mexico to study security issues, unmanned aircraft surveillance systems, ranchers' needs, economic development needs and migrant conditions.

The LFC is comprised of both Senate and House members. It meets during the interim, when

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the legislature is not in session, to examine the state's financial needs and makes recommendations to the full legislature on how expenditures should be made to fund those needs.

Sen. Jim White, R-East Mts., Abq., said taking the entire LFC to the border for four days demonstrates the legislative expenditure committee's commitment to resolve the area's complex issues. "This all-encompassing tour is an opportunity to see in person the new, complicated needs that we have been hearing about lately and to see in person the long-standing issues."

"Each and every one of us are touched to some degree by what is happening on our Southern border. There is a cost to all of us of what is happening or not happening down there," Sen. Bill Burt, RAlamogordo, added. "Those of us on the LFC who are in a position to assess and debate all financial issues of the state will gain a keen perspective of the real needs along the border, and how we as a state, can address those needs to benefit all New Mexicans."

Senator Neville said the visit is timely because it is now projected that large increases in revenue will come into the state's coffers and they could help address some of the needs along the border.

"We are all affected by what goes on at the border, in one way or another," Senator Neville said. "We are all affected because of our concerns over the security at the border and of what might be entering into our state illegally. We might be concerned about the hardships and adversities of our fellow ranchers in the south; concerns for our Southern New Mexico communities dealing with the influx of migrants and asylum seekers, or with the plight of the immigrants themselves."

The tour of the area includes the following stops:

- Antelope Wells, Santa Teresa and Columbus Ports of Entry; Examine infrastructure needs; discuss border security issues.
- View demonstration of Unmanned Aircraft Surveillance System.

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- Tour Russell Johnson Ranch, one hour from Antelope Wells.
- Walk through Port of Entry to Puerto Palms, Chihuahua.
- Tour Deming Migrant Shelter. Discuss immigrants entering the state illegally.
- Discuss health and public safety issues, transportation and infrastructure needs and border economic development and employment.

The New Mexico Senate Republican Office reports that According to the August, the most recent, Consensus Revenue Forecast, New Mexico has billions to address the state's needs.

According to the August forecast:

“New money,” defined as projected recurring revenues for the following fiscal year less current year recurring appropriations, is projected at \$ 907 million for FY 21, or 12.8 percent growth from the FY 20 recurring budget level.

Upward Revisions. Recurring revenues for FY 19 are estimated at \$ 7.92 billion, an increase of \$ 1.1 billion, or 16.2 percent, from FY 18. Recurring revenues for FY 20 are estimated at \$ 7.78 billion, a decline of \$ 143.6 million, or 1.8 percent, from FY 19. Estimated ending balances for FY 19 are \$ 1.71 billion, or 27 percent, and projected ending balances for FY 20 are \$ 2.28 billion, or 32 percent.