

FOG urges Sen. Luján's office to release more information on his health following stroke

Written by By Kathi Bearden, president, FOG Board of Directors
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The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (FOG) joins U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján's friends and constituents in wishing him a full recovery from his recent cerebellar stroke and subsequent surgery. And, of course, our thoughts and well wishes extend to his family.

News of the stroke he suffered days ago shocked all of New Mexico and the nation. Sen. Luján has worked for years for the progress and advancement of New Mexico. He has been a friend to New Mexicans as he continues the tradition of service begun by his father, late New Mexico House Speaker Ben Luján.

Welcome news from Sen. Luján's Chief of Staff reports the Senator will make a full recovery. Support from both sides of the aisle for a full recovery for the Senator is appreciated and needed in these trying times we face as a state and as a nation.

While all of us respect the family's wishes for privacy during this stressful time, a balance must be struck between that privacy and the public's right to know. As every elected official can tell you, when you voluntarily step into the public sphere, you waive many of those privacy rights. Sen. Luján's absence from the Senate is an issue of great public importance, particularly with a U.S. Supreme Court appointment on the horizon.

New Mexicans are left confused and concerned about the lack of information from the Senator's office. The Senator's health, his absence from the Senate, and his future service are issues of

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public importance. The veil of privacy must be lifted so that New Mexicans know the state of Sen. Luján's health and their representation within the Senate.

The Senator and his staff must find a way to balance privacy against the public's right to know. A possible solution would be daily briefings and updates from a spokesperson, as well as daily briefings from his treating physician. This would protect the Senator's privacy, but also ensure New Mexicans have the information they need as constituents.

We wait eagerly for the Senator to release information himself. In the meantime, it is a reasonable expectation that others share information with the public on his behalf. FOG wishes Sen. Luján a speedy recovery and hopes to see him at work soon.

The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (FOG) is the state's leading transparency watchdog. FOG is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a single mission to help New Mexicans understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities under New Mexico "sunshine laws" – the Inspection of Public Records Act and the Open Meetings Act. We educate, advocate, and when necessary, litigate to defend the public's right to know.