

Governor seeks applications for State Auditor replacement

Written by By Matthew Reichbach NM Political Report
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The governor is soliciting applications to replace Tim Keller as State Auditor.

Keller was elected mayor of Albuquerque on Nov. 14, and he will be sworn in on Dec. 1.

Once he resigns as State Auditor, Gov. Susana Martinez will be able to appoint a replacement who will serve through the next election in 2018.

Justine Freeman, a spokeswoman for the State Auditor's Office, said Keller will step down on Nov. 30, before his term as mayor begins. They informed the governor's office on Nov. 15 and Freeman said they are "ready and willing to assist with the [Office of the State Auditor] transition."

A spokesman for Martinez said her office is requesting applications from those who are interested.

"From those applications, she will appoint a new state auditor who adheres to high ethical standards and is committed to rooting out waste, fraud and abuse," Joseph Cueto wrote.

It's similar to the process from when Dianna Duran resigned from the Secretary of State's office in 2015. Duran resigned hours before pleading guilty to multiple charges related to misusing campaign funds.

One possible replacement is Robert Aragon. The former state representative (as a Democrat for three terms beginning in 1979) ran against Keller in 2014 for State Auditor, as a Republican.

Aragon supported Martinez's 2010 campaign as the head of a "Democrats for Martinez" group, before he became a Republican in 2012. Aragon received an appointment to the state Board of Finance from Martinez in 2011, a position he still holds.

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In 2015, Maggie Toulouse Oliver applied for the open Secretary of State position. But Martinez instead chose a Republican, Brad Winter. Winter served as Secretary of State while also serving on the Albuquerque City Council. Winter was a placeholder, and did not run for reelection in 2016. Toulouse Oliver ran and won.

Whether Martinez chooses the person who will be the Republican standard bearer in 2018 for the position or another placeholder is not known.

Cueto said applications are due Dec. 1.

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