

Martinez considering a special session to address shortfall

Written by By Matthew Reichbach NM Political Report
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Reports indicate that Gov. Susana Martinez is considering calling the Legislature into a special session to deal with what looks like a large shortfall in the state's budget.

The news comes nearly a week after Senate Finance Committee Chair John Arthur Smith said a special session would be needed. Smith made the comments during a legislative interim committee.

The Associated Press reported [July 26] that Martinez has been "working for weeks with executive agencies and a key legislative committee" on how to deal with the shortfall.

Smith, a Democrat from Deming, said he spoke to Martinez's staff about the need for a special session.

The Santa Fe New Mexican was at the State Investment Council meeting where Martinez first publicly broached the subject of a special session.

According to the paper, Martinez spoke about the need to bring legislators back in to "close the books" on the budget for the fiscal year that ended recently.

"I really like to see this get resolved before we get to the Capitol," she told members of the council. "[I'm hoping it's] a four-hour session. We walk in and walk out."

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Democrats want a special session to take place soon.

“The longer the Governor delays in calling back the Legislature to deal with this pressing crisis, the worse it is going to be for children, families and communities across New Mexico,” Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez, D-Belen said. “It is irresponsible to think that we can continue to kick the can down the road. We are already spending money we do not have.”

Democrats in the Senate also said their caucus ruled out any cuts to education, either K-12 or higher education.

It’s not clear if Martinez is addressing what Smith said could be a \$500-million shortfall in the current year’s budget.

Martinez is the only one who can call the Legislature into a special session. Martinez would be able to limit the bills that could be considered to specific topics.

Smith said last week he told Martinez’s office that cuts alone would not be able to fill the shortfall.

Martinez pledged to not raise any taxes while in office when she first ran. Adhering to that pledge has been a mainstay of her political stump speech and various addresses during her time in office.

The AP also reported that members of the SIC said permanent funds, largely funded by oil and gas revenues, shrunk by \$386 million in the year ending on June 30.

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