



A new voice in the New Year

Projecting our party's actions with words

16 February 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

Word from our Chairwoman

Photo courtesy of Debra Haaland

11 Feb. 2016

by Sonia Gonzalez



Debra Haaland, Chairwoman of the Democratic Party of New Mexico, expresses how important 2016 will be for the party and the State of New Mexico.

“As we bring in this 2016 election, we want our words to match our actions. The party’s new student-driven newsletter is an exciting fresh project inviting UNM & CNM students to contribute in different qualities that will ignite our Democratic community to act and participate in this upcoming election,” says Haaland.

“The students partaking in this project represent their active membership in their

communities, as well as are model delegates of our party, sharing our similar Democratic concerns and values.”

Along with the newsletter has come a maximized fundraising effort, which has increased the party’s vocal outreach.

Other changes include moving NMDP offices to the UNM university area. “We’re closer to the people now,” adds Haaland, “which continues our aim to provide our fellow Dems continued support of the interests vested in them.”



Photo courtesy of FreedImage.com/ Irum Shahid

The New Mexico Lottery Scholarship- A Senator’s Aim for Expansion

Bill 103, sponsored in 2015 by Democrat Senator William P. Soules of Las Cruces, is set to expand the eligibility requirements for student’s applying for the Lottery Scholarship after high school. The expansion will allow students the opportunity to develop a broadened maturity and, most importantly, obtain sophisticated control of their own education via the experience of a ‘gap year’.

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With funding for the Lottery Scholarship at a low, many New Mexicans, particularly young students, are at risk to lose an affordable education.

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COMMUNITY SECTION:

The New Mexico Lottery Scholarship- A Senator's Aim for Expansion

By Sonia Gonzalez 4 Feb. 2016

Albuquerque— Since 1996, the Legislative Lottery Scholarship has provided New Mexico students the opportunity to further their academics at institutions of higher education. Despite the Lottery having undergone various changes over the last two decades, this year of 2016 suggests to be a most promising one with the enactment of Bill 103, sponsored in 2015 by Democrat Senator William P. Soules of Las Cruces. Senator Soules' main objective for introducing this bill is to expand the eligibility requirements for application of the Lottery Scholarship after high school, allowing students the opportunity to develop a broadened maturity and, most importantly, obtain sophisticated control of their own education via the experience of a 'gap year'.

In order to understand the importance of the Lottery Scholarship today, one must look at the 32,070 students who, according to the Legislative Lottery Scholarship Report, during the fiscal year of 2014, were fully dependent on the Lottery's semester tuition funding that, as stated on the Official University of New Mexico (UNM) Scholarship Office webpage, "can pay up to \$2,447.12 per semester"; UNM is one of the largest collegiate-level institutions in the state. For New Mexico, where in 2011 and 2012, students between the ages of 5 and 17 made up the stifling 23 percent state poverty rate, and in 2013 and 2014 a shocking 4.7 percent student dropout rate, two figures that seem to go in tandem, the Lottery Scholarship serves as an incredible mechanism and opportunity for students to earn an invaluable education.

The introduction of Bill 103 by Senator Soules has come about with the awareness that students today, may need more time in deciding which degree is right for them, the opportunity to build life experience before partaking in the seriousness of university and college life, and most importantly, the option of working to save some cash before they make the investment in a two or four-year degree. Therefore, as part of his expansion efforts, Senator Soules has proposed that students be allowed a break from academia for up to 18 months upon graduating from high school, a 'gap year', as it's called, and yet still be eligible for application of the benefits provided by the Lottery Scholarship.

Exemplifying the need for Bill 103, are the stories of two NM students: a UNM senior, Ever Gonzales, and a Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) undergrad, Alexandria Dolin.

"If I didn't have the Lottery, I would not be able to go to school," says Gonzales, who is currently receiving 95 percent tuition aid from the Lottery Scholarship; the remaining five percent of his tuition is covered by other scholarships that he has earned based on his academic merit. Despite his scholastic prowess, Gonzales says he has feared losing the Lottery due to its "eligibility requirements that obligate students to enroll in 15 credit hours per semester and maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA." Although these requirements are a standard demand practiced by many of the nation's educational institutions, Gonzales argues that they are unrealistic in today's age, as it "puts stress on students who have jobs, extracurricular activities and other responsibilities to which they must commit in tandem with their schooling."

CNM student, Alexandria Dolin, agrees. Having started her academic career at UNM where she was a recipient of the Lottery, and later relinquishing her scholarship by not meeting the minimum requirements, Dolin transferred to CNM where she is, today, completing her pre-requisite courses at a more affordable cost compared to that of UNM. According to Dolin, CNM provides her a more or less manageable lifestyle, allowing her to advance as a full time student and meet her personal timeline goals. Despite her better circumstance, Dolin still says she has very little time to work the hours she needs to pay for school, as well as attend extracurricular activities that garner her experience in her field.

Under the reforms introduced by Bill 103, issues like that experienced by Gonzales and Dolin could very well be mitigated. According to the American Gap Association, a gap year provides "increased maturity, greater 'ownership' of the student's education, increased self-awareness, greater global awareness, fluency in a foreign language, and of course self-confidence."



Photo courtesy of Freemages.com/ Gonzalo Silva

A gap year also shows benefits at the educational level, with "universities reporting an increase in GPA, greater engagement in campus life, increased likelihood that students will graduate 'on time' or within four years, and of course greater clarity with career ambitions."

Although in the past, the Lottery was designed with the allowance of students to uphold their academic careers and meanwhile work and maintain a well-rounded life, today and in contrast, the current Lottery requirements allow students just a one semester gap between high school and college.

All in all, it is becoming clearer that the present Lottery requirements are not the most ideal in this ever-changing landscape of life and education. Still, for students to obtain the education they need, it is pertinent that they find a way to balance the demands of their adult and academic lives in the best way they can. Allowing students a gap year, such as that proposed by Senator Soules, may be the subsequent progressive and beneficial remedy we've all been waiting for. Only time will tell, but with this Senator's aim for expansion, comes hope for a brighter future.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN GAP ASSOCIATION?

The American Gap Association is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit accreditation and standards-setting organization for Gap Years that is recognized as such by the US Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. The organization continues to advance the field of Gap Years by collaboratively pioneering research on its benefits, as well as serving as an information and advocacy hub for university admissions personnel and educational counselors.

VISIT THE AMERICAN GAP ASSOCIATION WEBSITE AT:
<http://www.americangap.org/>

POLITICS SECTION

ALBUQUERQUE – In a year of a heated presidential campaign, we found ourselves often overlooking certain local land state issues. An example of this lies with the current state of the Legislative Lottery scholarship, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Since its passage, over half a billion dollars have been distributed to students from every county in the state of New Mexico. However, in recent years, funding for the lottery scholarship has fallen from covering 100 percent of tuition to 95 percent and now to 90 percent. These rather short decreases don't equate to much, but if the number continues to fall, or if more limitations are put in place, many New Mexicans will be in trouble.

Since the Legislative Lottery Scholarship program was created in 1996 by Democratic Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez, students in every county of the state have received some sort of aid from the scholarship. According to a recent KRQE report¹, over half of full-time students at the University of New Mexico are recipients of the Lottery Scholarship. "The revenues are not as good as they have been in the past, but I believe students are getting 90 percent of their tuition paid," said Majority Leader Sanchez. With funding for the Lottery Scholarship at a low, many New Mexicans, particularly young students, are at risk to lose an affordable education.

Students: The Real Lottery Players

By Adan J. Serna

As Democrats, our party leaders and grassroots have come together to protect the future of this scholarship. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, and it is vital we continue to invest in them. Zack Quintero, President of the Young Democrats of New Mexico, knows the importance of the Lottery Scholarship, saying it has "serviced an incredible amount of students and we have made it a priority to have their back in this." Young Democrats are passionate about the Lottery Scholarship, and have shown how impactful they can be "on a host of issues ranging from equal pay for equal work to limiting over testing in our schools and more; overall they are engaged in issues they feel will impact the future development of our state. We have seen Young Democrats advocate against discrimination in the LGBTQ community and others push against curfew laws that limit the constitutional rights of young people," says Quintero. The Young Democrats of New Mexico have also made large strides in getting young people out to vote by "getting them to the polls by making them feel engaged enough to act on what they care about. Holding attention is one thing, translating that to action is a different process all together," concluded Quintero.

Being a student and an activist myself, I also worry about the Legislative Lottery Scholarship,

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a scholarship I currently have. The Lottery Scholarship doesn't just keep college tuition affordable; it offers an incentive for some of our very best minds to stay in New Mexico for their education and careers. With many issues facing our state, it's important now more than ever that we continue to grow and keep talented leaders in-state so that we can find solutions to our most pressing problems. Student loan debt, in our country and our state, has surpassed all forms of other debt by hitting the \$1 trillion mark in 2011². Without this scholarship, our current and future students risk getting into debt for simply attending college. Investing in students and New Mexico talent is what we need to do to ensure a bright future for all New Mexicans.

REFERENCES

New Mexico students discuss lottery scholarship solutions (2015).
<http://krqe.com/2015/10/02/college-students-discuss-ways-to-bring-lottery-scholarship-to-full-capacity/>

Fin Aid / Loans / Student Load Debt Clock
<http://www.finaid.org/studentloandebtclock.phtml>



Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez with Congress Woman Michelle Lujan Grisham at the annual Legislative Dinner in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

MEET THE TEAM



Adan J. Serna

Adan is currently earning his BA in Political Science & Communications at the University of New Mexico, where he is also an Emerging Lobo Leader, exemplifying his academic excellence and leadership in student government programs. As a Delegate of the NMDP Newsletter Program, he heads our section on politics, covering session reports, personal interviews with Senate and House members, and party community outreach. Adan is an avid photographer with many published works.



Addison Flores-Thorpe

Addison is currently earning her BA in Journalism at the University of New Mexico. She possesses excellent leadership

and communication skills and is thus the appointed Editor-In-Chief of the NMDP Newsletter Program. Aside from her knack for grammar and the language arts, Addison also provides our program with visual expertise, having designed our newsletter format and respective aesthetics.

Sonia Gonzalez

Sonia (not pictured) is currently earning her BA in Political Science and Spanish at the University of New Mexico, where she is also a Developing Leader of Cultural Architecture. As a Delegate of the NMDP Newsletter Program, Sonia leads our community section with coverage on voter demographic tendencies, as well as uses her fluency in Spanish to investigate issues concerning minorities and non-English-speaking communities.



Over 550 Democrats packed the ballroom at La Fonda in Santa Fe for the annual Legislative Dinner. This was a record-setting crowd for the Democratic Party of New Mexico.

Dates to remember

15 Feb. 2016 – Roosevelt County Democrats Women & Men Meeting (5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.)

17 Feb. 2016 – Sierra County Democrats pre-primary convention (5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.)

18 Feb. 2016 – Doña Ana County Democrats Monthly Meeting (6 p.m. – 8 p.m.)

20 Feb. 2016 – Bernalillo County Democrats Ward Meetings; a pre-primary convention for Sandoval, Valencia, and Otero Counties.

21 Feb. 2016 – Torrence County Democrats pre-primary convention (2 p.m. – 4 p.m.)

Picture Highlights



(Above) Bernalillo County Clerk and Candidate for Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver Addresses the Crowd



(Above) Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez (left) Presents State Senator John Pinto (right) with an award for lifetime achievement and commitment to the Democratic Party



State Auditor Tim Keller (left) with Attorney General Hector Balderas (right)