

gary smith "Career politicians aren't the solution, they are the problem!"
 congress www.garysmith2012.com Paid for by Gary Smith for Congress

Independent Source PAC Publishers of New Mexico's *SPYglass*
 "Protecting Working Families by investigating and exposing the actions and hypocrisy of the Conservative Agenda"
 Visit us online at: independentsourcepac.org

New Mexico Politics with
JOE MONAHAN

BRIAN THOMAS
 Democrat | State Representative | District 25

Comcast

ALBUQUERQUE AREA FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 244

BRANDENBURG DISTRICT ATTORNEY
 Democrat • Bernalillo County

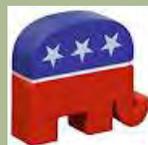
J.D. BULLINGTON
 GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, LLC

U.S. New Mexico FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
 Business Services • Credit Cards • Auto Loans • Mortgages

APOA
 Albuquerque Police Officers Association

Friday, February 03, 2012

Sanchez Preps Exit From Senate Race, And Friday Clippings From My Newsroom Floor



The tentative Senate campaign of John Sanchez is apparently about to end all together. GOP sources say the Lt. Governor is preparing to exit the contest and while one of his consultants says he won't enter the GOP race for the ABQ House seat, Republican eyes will still be watching. Filing date for the congressional races is Feb. 14.

Sanchez's Senate effort never caught fire. He loaned himself most of his campaign funds. "It was like Rick Perry's run for President. A lot of people asked him to run, but when he did he could not pull it off," said one Republican Alligator.

Also, Governor Martinez and the party hierarchy were solidly behind Heather Wilson. It was like his candidacy was killed in the crib.

Another veteran Republican told us:

A smart move for Sanchez as his campaign was going nowhere. Could have been a great candidate for GOP this fall but pissed too many people off along the way. Prob can't take the humiliation of stepping down to a Congressional race after this embarrassment. Those Texan consultants didn't earn their keep.

Sanchez's withdrawal, expected in the days ahead, is a major break for Wilson. If Sanchez had gone the distance, she risked being rounded by

Links

- [HOME](#)
- [E-MAIL ME](#)
- [About Joe](#)
- [Google News](#)
- [Real Clear Politics](#)
- [Huffington Post](#)
- [Drudge Report](#)
- [The Politico](#)
- [NM Newspapers](#)
- [NM TV stations](#)
- [Gov. Susana Martinez](#)
- [NM Legislature](#)

Archives

Select:

SWPS
 Southwest Political Services

INVEST in KIDS NOW!
www.InvestInKidsNow.org

TANICE

wilson. If Sanchez had gone the distance, she risked being pounded by national conservative groups with deep pockets who consider her too moderate. Now she should have a relatively easy road to the nomination. Las Cruces day care center owner Greg Sowards reports having \$600,000 in the bank, but neither the organization or support to yet pose a serious threat to Wilson who has banked \$1.1 million.

If Sanchez were to enter the ABQ congressional race he would face Dan Lewis, Janice Arnold-Jones and Gary Smith. But such a late switch could also cause major divisions within the party. Still, many R's believe a Hispanic nominee would be their best bet against the Dems.

We start our Friday clips with this:

ABQ Dem Senator Dede Feldman introduced a rule change for the New Mexico State Senate which would ban the carrying of firearms on the senate floor, in the senate gallery or in the committee rooms.

Is that so they don't shoot each other?...

Also from Santa Fe, is one term enough? Apparently so for Valencia County GOP State Rep. [David Chavez](#). A source close to him says it is "highly unlikely" that Chavez, an attorney, will seek re-election this year. That will leave the Dems with an opportunity to take it back after losing it to Chavez in 2010. The district has gotten more Dem friendly with redistricting, reports a Dem consultant.

UPDATE--Chavez emails in that he is "still in the race" and should he decide otherwise we will be among the first to know. Maybe that source moved him off the dime.

SILENT SUSANA

Governor Susana would not give an interview to the Santa Fe Reporter about her first year in office, but they went ahead and [did their story](#) without it. Why blacklist a publication just because it has a liberal point of view? Aren't you Governor of all the people? Not that Susana is the first to take it out on the ink-stained wretches. Back in the 80's, GOP Governor Garrey Carruthers refused to talk to the now defunct ABQ Tribune because he disagreed with their coverage. But the "us against them" attitude is much more of a trademark with the new breed of consultants and press flacks.

NO PICS, PLEASE

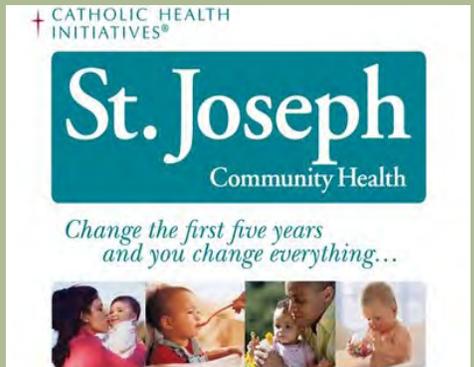
A number of readers agreed with our support of the decision of Legislative Council Director Raul Burciaga to [deny the Guv's request](#) to put pictures of foster children who are up for adoption on the walls of the Roundhouse. [Paula Tackett](#) was Burciaga's predecessor, holding the post for 22 years. From Santa Fe, she wrote:

Joe--I wrote my first letter to the editor today after many years of not and obviously took Raul's position. Then he showed my your comments and I just wanted to write you to say "thank you " as well. Your level of rationality gives me hope. Thanks again.

And ABQ attorney Antoinette Sedillo Lopez came with this:

Hi Joe, I was curious about whether the Governor's office has obtained the appropriate releases to post pictures of foster children publicly? I think many of those children might find that having their picture on the wall of such a public building might be embarrassing. I agree with you. Raul Burciaga was correct. It is the people's building and a fantastic showcase for local artists. The only way for the building to remain free of political agendas is to "just say no" to any and all causes...

Thanks for the note, Antoinette. The photographs were put together by the



AdChoices > < >

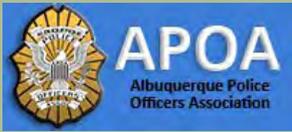
[Heather Wilson for Senate](#)
 Join Heather's fight to bring fiscal sanity to Washington
www.HeatherWilson.com

[Edwards Law Firm, P.A.](#)
 Automobile And Other Accidents. Serving You With Your Legal Needs.
www.marcedwardslawfirm.c...

[NM-1FE1CE1B - \\$99.99](#)
 1-800-430-6950 In

Heart Gallery of New Mexico Foundation.

DI'S DEAL



I ran into former Lt. Governor Diane Denish at the coffee shop the other morning and she gave us this letter she had just sent out:

Joe: Here is what I sent out. Since then, I have changed it to include Boys, many of whom are

also responding.

Ok Girls: As Woody Guthrie said in his new year's resolution #33 : Wake up and fight! Now is the time. The Susan G. Komen Foundation has joined the war on women and women's health. They have announced [they will no longer fund](#) Planned Parenthood for Breast Cancer Detection. They have caved to the pressure of those who want to forever close the doors on

Planned Parenthood. Please, call or email the Local NM Chapter. info@komentcnm.org or call them @ 505-265-4649.

Tell them to follow the example of our neighboring Denver who said they would buck the national office and continue to fund PP in Denver. This is not about politics, it is about women's health. Planned Parenthood NM provides hundreds of women with early detection services and funding is critical... Do this for the woman you know who has had breast cancer and survived because of early detection. Do it for the thousands who didn't survive...

UPDATE: Susan G. Komen for the Cure has [reversed its decision](#) to cut off grant money to Planned Parenthood following an intense backlash from women's groups and the left.

CLEAN IT UP

Bernalillo County Commission Chairman Art De La Cruz reports:

Youth groups, school clubs and teams are encouraged to apply for grants of up to \$500 as part of Bernalillo County's annual South Valley Clean Up Day. The grants will be awarded to nonprofit youth groups that help remove litter during the county's annual South Valley event on April 14. Visit www.bernco.gov/fun to access the application. Applicants can also contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 505.314.0400 or parks@bernco.gov for more information.

DISSING DENTAL



A Senior Alligator leaning against the walls at the Roundhouse says our support for building a dental school at the University of New Mexico is misplaced and is not gaining any traction:

Your idea to start a dental school is going over like a lead balloon. There are plenty of dentists in New Mexico, but not always in the places where they are needed most. The dental hygienist and dental assistant pools are growing from the graduates of UNM, CNN, and proprietary schools. Also, vans take patients to Mexico for excellent dental care at affordable prices. The people who lined up for free dental care are an argument for affordable dental care not a dental school.

Okay, Senior Gator. But it wasn't our idea to build a dental school. Senator Bingaman and Big Bill were in the fore on this one. We still support it as we don't see filling vans up with dental patients and taking them down to Juarez lives up to the promise that is American health care. And we'd like to see New Mexico kids get the chance to go to a dental school here and become part of the professional class--just as they do with our medical and law schools.

stock. Overnight snip option til 5 PM PST
www.andovercq.com/store/

[Brazilian Capoeira](#)

No Contracts.
Affordable Classes.
Fight for your health.
www.capoabq.com

[You can afford college](#)

New Mexico Highlands University Great programs. Low tuition.
www.nmhu.edu

Today we have for you what we think is the first real analysis of why this emotional wedge issue that dominates the state's political agenda remains stuck in the mud and in all likelihood will stay there.

--Intensity. Seventy-two percent of New Mexicans may say they want the licenses repealed, but how much do they care? Not as much as the Governor and her political team would like you to think. The truth is illegal immigration is a top priority of the Republican Party but not of the populace as a whole. That's why Democratic Senators are not caving en masse. They know other issues will decide their election fate.

--Overall, voters are most concerned about jobs and their personal financial condition. We are living through the most precarious economic times in recent history. Illegal immigration and driver's licenses don't register in their pocketbooks.

--Illegal immigration has sunk to [record lows](#). The economic recession/Depression here means fewer jobs for everyone. The problem--especially in the state's cities--is nowhere near as noticeable as it was during the late great bull market.

--The jobs undocumented immigrants traditionally fill are not highly sought by most New Mexico residents. Those are back-breaking jobs in agriculture, hotel maids, construction workers and the like. That tamps down resentment and in turn the desire for punitive legislation such as the license repeal.

--New Mexico is a majority-minority state. Hispanics, Native Americans, African-Americans and Asians make up the majority. There is widespread empathy for immigrants--illegal and otherwise--another reason the body politic here does not get in as much of an uproar as it does in less diverse states.

--And we would add one more reason to the list--political fumbling. The Governor's all or nothing approach which is designed to set up Dems for a fall in the election booths, means a no compromise approach. A bill that fell short of outright repeal could put us on the path toward total repeal, but she has insisted on a total repeal--[no compromise](#).

The Republicans could very well pick up a targeted seat or two over the driver's license issue, but they are not going to take over the New Mexican government with it. The Governor, [the conservative press](#) and the political operatives appear to have all overreached in their reading of the polls and the general public's true desires. You could disagree with our analysts, but for the third time in a row repeal of the driver's licenses is dying a slow death in Santa Fe. They seem to be on to something.

SHANNON RETURNS?



How about this? The possible return of former longtime ABQ Dem State Senator Shannon Robinson, but as a Republican. Say what? From the Alligator wire:

Democrat State Senator Shannon Robinson may challenge ABQ Democrat Senator Tim Keller for Senate District 17 in the November general election. Robinson changed his voter registration from Democrat to Republican on 12/28/11 and the "third party voter registration agent" is none other than oil and gas operator, Republican financier and former NM GOP Chairman Harvey Yates, Jr. Rumor has it that Robinson plans to challenge Keller in the general election as a Republican--a scheme Robinson and Yates concocted together.

If this comes down, call it "Shannon's Revenge." The veteran attorney was defeated in the June 2008 Dem primary by none other than Tim Keller. And talk about politics making for strange bedfellows. Harvey Yates and

Shannon Robinson? That's stranger than the UFO exhibits down in Roswell.

MICHELLE AND EMILY

Lujan Grisham



ABQ Dem City Councilor Debbie O'Malley writes of the fund-raising of Dem congressional candidate [Michelle Lujan Grisham](#):

In your post you stated, "Lujan-Grisham has received some early backing from Emily's List--the powerful pro-choice women's group--and that appeared to help her fund-raising." EMILY's List has yet to give her a "full endorsement." She has not received much help from the them and still out raised her opponents--that's pretty impressive. Now that she has two consecutive quarters where she is the money leader, a full endorsement is all but inevitable. When it happens it's apt to be a "game changer." In the next report, voters in CD1 will see the power women have when they organize.

Organization is key in a primary and while Michelle has had two good money quarters, she has to catch up to Eric Griego and Marty Chavez in that department. We're watching to see if she can.

And an Alligator email on Michelle's money report:

To Michelle's credit, she did better on raising money than people expected her to. That said, she has zero organization. All three candidates will spend roughly the same amount on TV, but guess what? Michelle doesn't have the organization to turn the voters out. Don't get me wrong--she can easily go on a spending binge starting immediately to hire lots of organizers and build her campaign infrastructure, but she's so far behind the curve that she'd have to spend and hire double what Marty and Eric's done respectively. Marty has invested in building a strong organization. And Eric has invested in building a strong organization. Michelle? None. Nada.

PAY THE LAWYERS

While the money isn't bad in ABQ, generally it pays more to be a lawyer in Santa Fe. By the numbers :

Lawyers in Santa Fe make an average annual salary of \$117,190, or \$56.34 per hour, based on [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) data. The BLS data puts 280 lawyers in Santa Fe as of May 2010. The runner up in New Mexico is the Albuquerque area, where its 1,560 lawyers earn an average of \$90,080 annually.

Over 1,500 hundred lawyers in the ABQ area? That has to work to keep their prices down.

REVERSE HALL?



Is there a chance that the judge in the legislative redistricting case could be reversed by the State Supreme Court? Dems have sued there asking that Judge Hall's plan be overturned, saying it is biased toward the R's. We asked one of our Legal Beagles for the latest:

I heard a lot of talk at the Legislature's opening day along the lines of "the Supreme Court appointed Jim Hall, they won't reverse him."

I personally think that to do so requires far greater math skills than they'd want to utilize.

The Supremes appointed Judge Hall to do the redistricting after the Legislature failed to come to an agreement

COMING OUT AHEAD

We blogged the other day of how State Senate Rules Committee Chair Linda Lopez made a play against the nomination of Greg Marcantel as Secretary of Corrections. The administration called it a "smear" job and fought back hard. And on this one we would say the Fourth Floor played it right. The vote [news](#):

A move to derail Gov. Susana Martinez's nominee to run the state prison system fell flat Wednesday. State senators voted 38-1 to confirm Gregg Marcantel as secretary of the Department of Corrections. Sen. Linda Lopez, D-Albuquerque, stood alone in opposing Marcantel, saying she was not satisfied that he honestly answered questions about his past. Lopez is chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee, which runs background checks on nominees for high-tier government appointments. She said Marcantel, unlike hundreds of nominees before him, did not properly answer a question about a history of workplace discipline.

But then there's Susana's state fair commissioners. The Senate played games with the Guv on those. She tried to withdraw the nominations, but the Senate went ahead and [voted on them anyway](#).

BUT WILL HE SPEND?



Las Cruces day care center owner and GOP US Senate candidate Greg Sowards [announces](#):

Conservative Republican U.S. [Senate Candidate Greg Sowards](#) announced that his campaign will show over \$636,000 in cash on hand after the fourth quarter transition:

"We have turned a major corner at the Sowards for Senate camp. I have brought on a new Campaign Manager and a new Grassroots Coordinator. My message of restoration is resonating with the people of New Mexico and America. We are now well-positioned to mount an impressive fund raising drive."

Sowards has largely self-financed his campaign. When he turned over his initial campaign team, there was speculation that he was getting cold feet and would not spend much of the money he loaned to himself. His main rival, Heather Wilson, has \$1.1 million in the bank and Sowards remains a long shot at toppling her. But if he does end up spending a bunch of TV money it will probably help Wilson as it would take votes away from Lt. Governor John Sanchez who is seen as her most formidable rival. Meantime, Sanchez has been so MIA in the Senate race that he has to quash rumors that he will leave the Senate contest and seek the GOP nod for the ABQ Congressional seat. His chief consultant says [no switch is planned](#).

This is the home of New Mexico politics.

[E-mail](#) your news and comments. (jmonahan@ix.netcom.com)

Interested in reaching New Mexico's political community? Advertise here. Email us for details.



(c)NM POLITICS WITH JOE MONAHAN 2012
Not for reproduction without permission of the author

Posted by: Joe Monahan / Thursday, February 02, 2012

Wednesday, February 01,

2012

Latest Cash Reports Pinpoint Front Runners In Key Races, Plus: Another Senate Poll The R's Don't Like But The Dems Do, And: Thank You, Raul Burciaga



The federal candidate cash reports have poured in for the final quarter of last year and here's where it takes the Alligator consensus:

---Eric Griego and Marty Chavez are neck and neck for the ABQ Dem US House nomination with Michelle Lujan Grisham having the money now to join them and Dan Lewis assumes the front-runner role for the Republican nod.

---Martin Heinrich is the hands-down front-runner for the Dem US Senate nomination and the same holds true for Republican Heather Wilson.

---The open US Senate seat is ranked "lean Dem" for the November election and the ABQ congressional seat is "likely Dem."

Neither Griego or Chavez blew the fund-raising doors off their hinges. Griego, an ABQ state senator, reported raising \$143,000 for the quarter and ending it with \$208,000 in cash in the bank. Former ABQ Mayor Chavez reports raising \$149,000 (including a \$15,000 loan) and having \$217,000 in cash. Numbers for Michelle Lujan Grisham came out Wednesday morning and surprised:

Reporting...\$278,173.62 money in the bank Lujan Grisham has established herself as a significant force in the upcoming primary election. Lujan Grisham's campaign is reporting \$161,529.98 raised (including a \$20,000 loan) for the last quarter of 2011. Lujan Grisham has \$69,696.15 more than State Senator Eric Griego, and \$60,548.73 more than former Albuquerque mayor Marty Chavez.

Lujan Grisham has received some early backing from Emily's List--the powerful pro-choice women's group--and that appeared to help her fund-raising. Also, she has spent hardly any money and now has to get moving on putting her campaign together. Michelle opted to save her money while Eric and Marty were putting together their political operation.

Griego and Chavez are inching closer to a one-on-one duel, but much of it may play out in the mailboxes, not as much on the TV screens as in the past. \$200k with five months to go is not much and that means grassroots activism will be more important than usual. Lujan Grisham remains the wild card, not getting the early start with endorsements and organizations these two have, but competing on the cash count. And there are still a couple of months to raise the TV money.

The two longtime political foes--Chavez and Griego--are sure to come after each other with all they have, especially in light of the money reports that show they are heavily outraising their Republican foes. ABQ City Councilor Lewis reported raising \$64,000 and had \$102,000 in cash in the bank, retired Army Sergeant Gary Smith \$88,000 and former ABQ State Rep. Janice Arnold-Jones only \$20,000.

It will get easier for Lewis to raise money now that Jon Barela has decided not to run, but not by much. R's don't seem animated by this contest. The Dems are collecting much more cash than the R's, an early signal that the district is tilting toward them and exciting the Dem contenders.

On the Senate side, Hector Balderas reports raising \$108,000 in the fourth quarter, compared to \$483,000 for Martin Heinrich, Hector has \$434,000 in

cash in the bank and Heinrich has about \$1.4 million. The numbers speak for themselves.

In the GOP contest, Lt. Governor John Sanchez did not release his numbers, meaning there will be no positive surprise and leaving Heather Wilson the undisputed front runner for the nomination. She reports \$1.1 million in the bank. The third hopeful, Greg Sowards, is largely self-financing and does not pose the threat to Wilson that Sanchez could.

POLL WATCH



Another poll out on the race for New Mexico's open US Senate seat confirms our ranking of it as "lean Dem." Republican Heather Wilson continues to trail Dem Martin Heinrich in a hypothetical fall match-up. However, this survey shows the two nearly tied, with Heinrich leading 45% to 44%. MOE is 4 percent. A poll from the Dem firm PPP conducted in December had Wilson losing by 7 points.

The problem is that Wilson has superior statewide name ID to Heinrich, having served 10 years in congress to his three. Also, she ran for the GOP nod for Senate in 2008. That Wilson is not ahead and Heinrich lagging is the real news here, although R's have got to be breathing a sigh of relief that they can still argue the race remains in play and winnable.

R's panned the PPP poll, arguing its sample was flawed. Now they are blasting this one for being done only among "registered" voters, not "likely" voters. They say a poll of likely voters would be more favorable to Heather. They have a point, but when are they going to get a poll they like? That means one that shows the quasi-incumbent Wilson ahead.

It's a good question. Wilson's unfavorable ratings after years in politics and many negative campaigns are higher than Heinrich's. Veteran observers say it is holding her back and preventing her from moving toward the 50% threshold. Again, with her high name ID, this is not good. Voters know Heather. That means she will have to win the race by going negative on Heinrich and his short record in public service makes that tricky.

Other observers we respect [don't necessarily see it our way](#) and say that Wilson can reinvent herself. That's what makes for a good debate, but we see the R's spinning overtime trying to keep this race in play. Wilson has shown she is qualified to hold a US Senate seat, but she is going to have to show us better numbers to make us a believer that her past baggage is not bogging her down.

This survey was a team effort between a GOP and Dem firm. The R company is Public Opinion Strategies (POS) where Nicole McCleskey, wife of Governor Martinez's chief political advisor Jay McCleskey is employed. The Dem firm is Fairbank, Maslin etc. The poll was conducted in early January for the Colorado College State of the Rockies Project and is posted [here](#).

By the way, in that poll the job performance of Gov. Martinez is "strongly approved" by 34% and 27% "somewhat approve." A December PPP poll had her favorable rating at 50%. This poll would have the overall favorable at 61%, but we don't like the phrasing, "somewhat approve." It seems misleading. Why not ask if is she doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job? Or ask straight up whether voters approve or disapprove of her performance? That's what PPP did. We'd say Susana--as of early January---

had an overall approval rating of over 50%. That's good for a GOP Governor in a Dem state. Until we see a clear cut polling question that takes her higher, we'll stop at that number.

RAUL IS RIGHT



Raul Burciaga, you are right. But you are going to [take heat](#) for your level-headed decision denying a request from Governor Martinez and not permitting photos of foster kids up for adoption to be posted on the walls of the Roundhouse. A [newspaper editorial](#) decried the decision, calling it heartless. But it isn't.

As director of the [Legislative Council Service](#), Mr. Burciaga presides over a spectacular building that has a special place in the hearts of New Mexicans. The one-of-a-kind and awe inspiring art collection on permanent display is a testament to the hard work and loving care that has gone into making a visit to the capitol an unforgettable adventure for resident and tourist alike.

The last thing we need is the bevy of interest groups that parade to the capitol arguing that their cause deserves to be highlighted upon its walls--no matter how controversial or off-putting. Everyone has a soft spot for kids and it's unfortunate that the Governor has gone down this road, but Burciaga's job is to look at the big picture and that he does. He says:

The issue is simply that we have always done our best to keep any kind of cause, if you will, from being featured at the Capitol. As soon as we do that, then we start getting things that are little more questionable.

And that's putting it politely. In today's toxic political environment who knows what requests Burciaga would be fielding once he broke with the valuable tradition of not allowing any postings other than the timeless and apolitical art that celebrates our state.

Since 1966, the capitol has been a repository of New Mexico culture and art. There is plenty of partisan politics in the House and Senate chambers and committee rooms--more than enough. Do we really want that spilling out into the hallways? That's where we're likely headed if the no posting decision is reversed.

Burciaga made a tough call, but that's what he is there for--to protect the politicians from themselves. Thanks, Raul.

THE BOTTOM LINES

It's newsman Milan Simonich, not the other first name we gave him in a blog first draft Tuesday, He toils for Texas-New Mexico newspapers of which there are eight....And candidates for statewide judicial offices file their petition signatures on Feb. 14, not the date or dates we have been using.

This is the home of New Mexico politics.

[E-mail](#) your news and comments. (jmonahan@ix.netcom.com)

Interested in reaching New Mexico's political community? Advertise here. Email us for details.



(c)NM POLITICS WITH JOE MONAHAN 2012
Not for reproduction without permission of the author

Posted by: Joe Monahan / Wednesday, February 01, 2012

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

The First Gent's Job: Pushing Literacy: Plus:

Is Susana Through in Senate? She Feels It's Stiff-Arm, Plus: A Bow Tie Wearing Budget Watcher



He likes to hunt and enjoys a good baloney sandwich but other than that we haven't heard much from First Gentleman Chuck Franco during his wife's first year in office. But [word is getting out](#) on Franco's push to improve the state's literacy:

With about 46 percent of New Mexico's native English speakers reading at a sixth-grade level or below, the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy is pushing the Legislature for more funding. And helping drive their efforts is first gentleman Chuck Franco. The husband of Gov. Susana Martinez spoke at a news conference earlier this week about his support for expanding such services and the goal of eradicating illiteracy in New Mexico. "My interest in adult literacy came to me when I was in law enforcement."

Franco said that when he started working with troubled youth, he realized that their issues ran beyond behavioral problems. Having parents at home who couldn't read was one of them.

Good work, First Gent. And along those lines, we'd like to lobby you a bit.

There's [a constitutional amendment](#) making the rounds in Santa Fe that would allow us to use funds from the state's \$10 billion Permanent Fund for very early childhood (birth to five years) education and development programs. Don't you think if we got to them at that age that we could break the cycle of illiteracy that afflicts so many of the state's children and that is of such concern to your good offices? Not that we are among those who go ballistic over the proposal from your better half to [hold back third graders](#) who can't read well. It's just that evidence is mounting that it may be too late to change patterns by then.

Just some thoughts, Chuck, and we're always available to discuss them further over a good baloney sandwich. We'll bring the mustard.

NORTHERN ACTION

Byrd & family



We get this from the newest candidate in the race for the GOP nomination for the northern congressional seat held by Dem Ben Ray Lujan:

Quay County rancher and engineer [Jefferson L. Byrd](#) announced his candidacy for New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District today after months of traveling the district and visiting with grassroots

conservatives.

"...I believe that my strong conservative background is best to take on Ben Ray Lujan's socialist policies...In order to effectively compete for this seat, we need a true conservative who is from the district and has actually lived through the tough times that the Obama/Lujan agenda has created."

That reference to a conservative "who is from the district" is an indirect jab at businessman Rick Newton, the other GOP candidate in the northern race. Newton lived in ABQ, but now lives in Taos. Byrd was born in Springer, NM.

On the Dem side, Lujan is seeking re-election and is a heavy favorite but he is being challenged for the nomination by former Santa Fe County Commissioner Harry Montoya. Speaking of which....

WELCOME HARRY

Here they come, Harry. Santa Fe County Commissioner Harry Montoya's challenge to northern NM Dem Congressman Ben Ray Lujan for the Dem nomination brings this Alligator attack:

...It was interesting that a key aspect of Harry Montoya's announcement was taking on corruption when he's had his fair share of ethical issues. The New Mexican pointed out part of it, reporting on the fact that his non-profit got county money while Montoya was a county commissioner and his brother-in-law had a contract with the county to lobby the legislature. That's just the beginning.

The former board president of Montoya's non-profit quit her job after nine years because of Montoya's behavior that included hiring his relatives and wasting money. Montoya talks about taking on the Lujan political machine when he had a machine of his own that put his relatives to work...I guess with Harry it's do as I say not as I do...

Montoya is no stranger to hardball politics. He was in the rough and tumble for the 2008 Dem congressional nomination and lost to Lujan.

CASH COUNT

In the ABQ US House race for the GOP nomination, retired Army Sergeant Gary Smith reports \$88,000 in cash on hand at the end of December. He reports raising over \$125,000, most of which he loaned himself. The federal candidate money reports for the fourth quarter of 2011 are being filed this week.

SOWARDS ON HEATHER



While observers wait for GOP US Senate candidate John Sanchez to do something--do anything--when it comes to taking on front runner Heather Wilson, the their candidate in the race--[Greg Sowards](#) of Las Cruces--isn't waiting:

I am the only candidate in New Mexico with a clear solution to combat Obama's Liberal Agenda and restore the promise of prosperity to New Mexico and America. In stark contrast to my Moderate rival in the New Mexico Republican primary, I stand for strong conservative values. With your help, together we can stop the era of bailout-minded career politicians and eco-extremism.

Wilson's perception as a "moderate" contender in a GOP primary that will attract legions of conservative voters remains her main weakness, but only if her foes are effective in exploiting it.

DOWNS DEAL

What we lovingly call the "down and dirty Downs deal" burst into the headlines as powerful Dem State Senator Tim Jennings declared that the 25 year racino lease recently awarded to the Downs at ABQ should be investigated by law enforcement. (Hello, Attorney General King?). And then came this--the Guv [folding her hand](#) in the face of stiff legislative opposition:

Republican Gov. Susana Martinez has withdrawn the nominations of four state fair commissioners after Democratic lawmakers sharply criticized her administration's handling of a 25-year lease for a company to build a larger casino at the state fairgrounds. The governor's move on Monday eliminates the possibility the Senate might reject some of her appointments to the commission, which approved the lease late last year with the Downs at Albuquerque. Jennings of Rowell and other Democrats on the Senate Rules Committee objected to the lease during a confirmation hearing on commissioners. They say the lease was rushed through and questioned whether the Downs got preferential treatment.

The Dem Legislature often had a hard time finding its voice when one of their own--Big Bill--was on the Fourth Floor, but after a year of playing poker with Susana they are learning her moves. Can she keep up with theirs?

Now Senior Alligator analysis direct from the Senate Rules Committee hearing:

Martinez withdrew (86'd) the four state fair commissioners rather than face a floor fight. Two commissioners were approved unanimously by the rules committee (the two who had opposed the deal). She then tried to lay off the alleged corruption on the commissioners that she appointed and told what to do. She was seriously outmatched by the Senate. She gets nothing through them after today.

Nothing through the Senate? Well, nothing that you are going to give a second glance.

MORE SENATE PUSHBACK

And then there's Senator Linda Lopez, chair of that powerful Rules Committee, who didn't have the stomach to take on a powerful University of New Mexico Board of Regents member when he came before her committee for a confirmation hearing when Big Bill was Guv, but is now unloading both barrels when it comes to Republican Martinez. Santa Fe newsman Milan Simonich, covering for the El Paso Times and with [much more aggressive reporting](#) than the blogs and papers in Cruces have had with Susana (welcome to the wrong side of town, Milan) comes with [this](#):

Lopez is challenging the fitness of Gov. Martinez's nominee to run New Mexico's prison system. (She) issued a statement today saying she had "strong reservations" about Greg Marcantel, secretary-designate of the Department of Corrections. Lopez chairs the Rules Committee, which does background checks on the governor's nominees for cabinet posts. She said the Senate's investigation of Marcantel (left) had turned up an unfavorable work history. "... The background check revealed that he has in fact been suspended twice as a prison guard, and was charged in a civil lawsuit with breach of duty..."

The Guv's office goes ballistic in response, accusing Lopez of conducting a "smear" job. Nope. Attention Fourth Floor (and Fifth), it's a political Movida signaling the start of the election year. You guys have the Dems squirming over repealing driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants and now they've got you squirming over the Downs deal and more.

Martinez and her political team do politics very well, but now we are in the deep weeds of actually running the government. And that's another story--one that is now beginning to fully unfold.

TWO WEEKS OR SO

AP's Massey



About two weeks to go now in the 30 day legislative session and the AP's intrepid Barry Massey, (now the dean of the regular capitol press corps?) has begun [the long budget watch](#):

A proposed \$5.6 billion state budget hit a last-minute snag in a House committee Monday after Republicans objected that several of the GOP governor's initiatives might get chopped if the state's revenue outlook dims. The Appropriations and [Finance](#) Committee postponed a final vote on the budget, and the chairman, Rep. Henry Kiki Saavedra, D-Albuquerque, said he was surprised by the GOP complaints because members of the panel had tentatively agreed last week on provisions of the spending plan. The budget proposal calls for a

spending increase of nearly \$216 million, or about 4 percent, in the fiscal year that starts July 1. However, the plan leaves about \$41 million available for possible tax cuts - a high priority for the governor - or additional budget increases.

The state has gone from a \$6 billion budget and is now crawling back towards \$5.6 billion. That's why tax cuts create more resistance than usual.

Whatever happens, Massey's trademark bow tie is sure to have plenty of coffee stains on it by the time the session ends.

This is the home of New Mexico politics.

[E-mail](mailto:jmonahan@ix.netcom.com) your news and comments. (jmonahan@ix.netcom.com)

Interested in reaching New Mexico's political community? Advertise here. Email us for details.

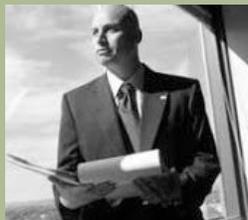


(c)NM POLITICS WITH JOE MONAHAN 2012
Not for reproduction without permission of the author

Posted by: Joe Monahan / Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Monday, January 30, 2012

Heinrich Says He Has Commanding 52%-22% Lead Over Balderas, Plus: Wilson Vs. Sanchez News; More On City Lawsuits And: Susana Shows Her Frustration



Seeking to create an air of inevitability, the campaign of Dem US Senate candidate [Martin Heinrich](#) has released a poll that shows him pounding rival [Hector Balderas](#) 52%-22% among likely voters in the June primary. Among Anglos he

leads 57%-15% and among Hispanics his lead is 46%-30%. (Complete poll [here](#).)

This campaign poll and Heinrich's earlier disclosure that at the end of last year he had \$1.4 million in the bank (Hector had \$475,000 at the end of September) are like a vise tightening on Balderas. He will report his fourth quarter fund-raising this week and if it is not an impressive number, he could start to feel pressure from the Dem establishment to get out of the contest.

Lest his poll be dismissed as simply a case of him having better name ID than Hector, Heinrich's pollsters also said he held a hefty 51% to 28% lead among voters who could identify both Heinrich and Balderas.

If Heinrich's poll has it right and he is indeed over the crucial 50% mark, only harsh negative campaigning by Balderas is likely to get the race in play. Balderas, a former one term state representative elected state auditor in 2010, could also rip open the contest with an unexpectedly strong showing at the March Democratic Party pre-primary convention where delegates vote to place candidates on the June ballot. But these polling numbers and Heinrich's strength in his hometown base of ABO would seem

to make a big convention move by Hector unlikely.

More from the poll which Heinrich's campaign says surveyed 600 likely primary voters, has a margin of error of 4 percent and was conducted with live interviewers, not by robocalls:

58 percent of voters give Heinrich a favorable rating, while just 12 percent view him unfavorably. Moreover, 66 percent of voters approve of the job Heinrich is doing as Congressman. Heinrich's standing is equally good among Hispanics and Anglos. Balderas has good standing (37 -12 percent favorable-unfavorable, 46 percent job approval), but nowhere near as good as Heinrich's.

BLOG ANALYSIS & CONTEXT



If you're a Hector fan, the problem with Heinrich is the mistake-free campaign he has run in the early stages. He has aggressively raised money, captured endorsements, toured the state without putting his foot in his mouth and all the while

continuing to serve in the US House without incident.

But longtime observers of state politics offer encouragement to Balderas, saying a one-on-one contest between an Anglo and an Hispanic in a statewide Democratic primary can deliver a positive surprise for the Hispanic. As many as 60% of those voting in the June primary will be Hispanic and Heinrich is below the 50% mark with them, although not by much.

As it is, Balderas must soon take the game to Heinrich and force him to drop the ball, but if Hector does that and loses, he makes a major enemy of Heinrich who could be a sitting US Senator. That could thwart any 2014 ambitions Balderas could have for attorney general or Governor.

The Heinrich-Balderas decision has been a painful one for many Dems who like both candidates, but with Rep. Heinrich's commanding lead in money and apparently the polls, the decision is becoming easier. Balderas must do something to keep it difficult.

WILSON'S WAY

GOP Senate candidate [Heather Wilson](#) and Heinrich have something in common. Both appear to be headed toward winning their respective June primary nominations. She now reports having \$1.1 million in the bank after raising about \$375,000 in the last quarter of the year. Her rival, Lt. Governor [John Sanchez](#), will report numbers this week. He has loaned himself several hundred thousand and at the end of September had \$249,000 in the bank.

The Sanchez campaign is enigmatic to longtime observers who see him as an attractive candidate but question whether he has put heart and soul into the effort in the early months. Heather has and it shows. Sanchez still has a shot, despite reports that his campaign team has been disrupted. If he attacks Heather and she proves to have a glass jaw, she could shatter. But she is making herself more and more shatter-proof in the same manner as Heinrich--conducting herself professionally with solid fund-raising, touring the state mistake free, getting major endorsements and leaving no room for doubters that that she isn't fully engaged in the battle.

ANOTHER TAKE

Here's [the latest take](#) from the National Journal in DC on the NM US Senate contest to fill the seat of retiring Dem Senator Jeff Bingaman:

Both Democrat Martin Heinrich and Republican Heather Wilson appear to be solidifying their leads over challengers in their respective primaries. A

Heinrich-Wilson matchup would focus on the Albuquerque-based district they both represented in Congress. While Democrats are confident in Heinrich's chances, Republicans are starting to view the race as a potential sleeper that could break their way, especially if President Obama's campaign falters.

We have the US Senate race for November ranked "lean Democrat" in the early going. Wilson, the likely GOP nominee, has high negatives, Obama is poised to carry the state and a recent horse-race poll from Dem polling group PPP shows Heinrich would beat Heather by seven points

DATELINE SANTA FE



The Guv is getting frustrated, and who can blame her? Her move to repeal the law permitting driver's license for undocumented immigrants has taken its first step towards [the legislative graveyard](#). In addition, her tax cut proposals are on life support because lawmakers fear the rosy economic projection giving the state a \$250 million surplus for the next budget year could disappear in the wake of crashing natural gas prices. [Says Susana:](#)

"Politicians who are not economists are starting to second-guess (the forecast) without any real understanding..."

That's kind of funny because state economists have been anything but accurate in their projections the past several years, consistently overstating what the state would take in.

And natural gas prices were [crashing again](#) last week. They will hit bottom at some point, but the state takes a significant royalty hit when they dive. That's the problem with being so dependent on oil and gas revenues.

Meanwhile, there's a lot of sympathy for Martinez's proposal to do away with the gross receipts tax for businesses taking in less than \$50,000 a year. The problem is it is not revenue neutral. She does not make up for the lost revenue among the top tier of taxpayers or find some other place to replace the cash that would be lost from [the tax break](#).

The administration says there are about 56,000 businesses on the books with annual receipts of less than \$50,000, but an unknown number of those are dormant and have no sales. The previous number was about 40,000 for businesses with less than \$50,000 in yearly sales. The cost of the tax exemption is now estimated at \$24 million annually for the state and \$16 million a year for local governments.

ALL OR NOTHING

Martinez and Department of Finance Secretary Clifford might be able to get their tax cut if, for example, they were willing to craft a compromise that did away with some of the unneeded tax credits for the oil and gas industry. But compromise is a word the Fourth Floor uses in year end newspaper interviews but not too much when it comes to the legislative process.

It is the all or nothing attitude that is keeping the Martinez legislative ship from sailing. How about taking a partial win on the driver's license issue and warn lawmakers you are coming back for the full repeal? How about you get the gross receipts tax cut but nick the well-off to finance it? And so much more...

Martinez is now saying she has the votes in the House and Senate to pass the driver's license bill. That's true enough in the House, but the Senate? Huh? Maybe Susana is relying on those economists she trusts so much to also count her votes.

All or nothing appeals to the Guv's GOP base, but they are not going to

abandon her if she starts to move a tad to the center. This remains a gubernatorial administration with great potential, but until the Governor learns to outflank the legislature by taking a few of their ideas and melding them into her own, this Guv's ship is going to stay grounded.

THE PERRY FILE

CAO Perry



The Alligator who wondered here last week whether ABQ Chief Administrative Officer Rob Perry had a conflict of interest because of his relationship with prominent GOP attorney Paul Kennedy was not saying that Perry has acted unethically or pushed settlements in police misconduct cases that benefited Kennedy's law firms to the tune of over \$2.5 million. The Gator was questioning appearances and urging that the issue be looked at.

Before he worked for the city Perry shared office space with Kennedy, a longtime Perry friend and political associate. Both at one time sought the GOP nomination for attorney general. With the city paying out over \$8 million in recent months in settlement money the appearance question would seem more than germane, but former Dem ABQ City Councilor and attorney Michael Cadigan doesn't see it that way. He emails:

Joe, Your post left the impression of illegal, unethical collusion. It left the impression that Rob was associated with Kennedy as a partner/associate lawyer, which he was not. He just rented space. I read it very carefully (both posts) and I don't think it is fair. I'm not the world's biggest fan of Mayor Berry, but this attack is unfounded and unfair. The process by which the City decides to settle lawsuits is complicated and involves many people. Rob cannot decide to settle a case on his own.

Thanks for the thoughts, Michael, but Perry is associated with Kennedy! As we said, they shared office space together. They are both longtime Republican lawyers and personal and political friends. And as CAO, Perry (and the mayor) have ultimate sign-off authority on suits.

There is a personal relationship here and it needs to be covered as the city has paid out over \$8 million in taxpayer money in two years. It may seem like nitpicking but after the down and dirty Downs deal it seems very timely.

Let's hear Mr. Perry's description of this relationship and how and why it has not influenced the city's decision to settle misconduct cases rather than go to trial. This is not an "attack" but a line of questioning. Not that Mr. Perry has a propensity to answer any of our questions. But if segments of the local media care to shake the impression that it is in the bag for the city administration, it might want to pose these queries. Or better yet let's have the United States Department of Justice ask the many questions that are going unanswered.

TAKING WINNERS

One of our Legal Beagles comes with this explanation on why attorney Kennedy figures so prominently in the settlement of police misconduct cases:

If you look at Kennedy and the record of (his late partner Mary Han) in civil rights litigation all over New Mexico, you'll see a great degree of success, and a lot of justified payouts. There ain't a soul who can take away from the effort that their practice put out for their clients. It's why they get to cherry-pick the good cases and have the reputation they do (did). Paul just doesn't take on cases that aren't winners anymore because he doesn't have to.

THE BOTTOM LINES



In our ongoing culling of the top five NM sports stories since statehood a century ago Gil Armijo comes with a political take that we appreciate:



The #1 sports story was the 1974 gubernatorial election between Democrat Jerry Apodaca--a running back--versus Joe Skeen--a tight end. The running back won. Nuff' said...

A couple of corrections. Statewide candidates or federal office or for the office of U.S. Representative must turn in petition signatures on Feb. 14. All other legislative and judicial candidates must turn in petitions on March 20. More info [here](#)....We speculated that House Speaker Ben Lujan could give his son, northern Dem US Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, some of his nearly \$100,000 in campaign funds that he will no longer need now that he is retiring. But readers pointed out that federal law prohibits a federal candidate from receiving money from a state campaign account.

This is the home of New Mexico politics.

[E-mail](#) your news and comments. (jmonahan@ix.netcom.com)

Interested in reaching New Mexico's political community? Advertise here. Email us for details.



(c)NM POLITICS WITH JOE MONAHAN 2012
Not for reproduction without permission of the author

Posted by: Joe Monahan / Monday, January 30, 2012

website design by [limwebdesign](#)