



**MINUTES
of the
FOUR-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING
of the
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**June 23, 2025
State Capitol, Room 307
Santa Fe**

The four-hundred-twenty-seventh meeting of the Legislative Council was called to order by Senator Mimi Stewart, co-chair, on June 23, 2025 at 1:03 p.m. in Room 307 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

Present

Rep. Javier Martínez, Co-Chair
Sen. Mimi Stewart, Co-Chair
Rep. Gail Armstrong
Sen. Pete Campos
Rep. Christine Chandler
Rep. Rebecca Dow
Sen. Katy Duhigg
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Rep. Doreen Y. Gallegos
Sen. Michael Padilla
Sen. William E. Sharer
Rep. Reena Szczepanski
Sen. Peter Wirth
Sen. Pat Woods

Absent

Rep. Dayan Hochman-Vigil
Rep. Alan T. Martinez

Special Advisory Members Present

Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Special Advisory Members Absent

Sen. Natalie Figueroa
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson

Guest Legislator

Rep. Joanne J. Ferrary

Staff

Shawna Casebier, Director, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Randall Cherry, Assistant Director for Legislative Affairs, LCS
Monica Ewing, Assistant Director for Drafting Services, LCS
Anesa Serna-Espinoza, Assistant Director for Administration, LCS
Jeret Fleetwood, Project Coordinator, LCS
Erin Bond, Researcher, LCS

Sara Wiedmaier, Researcher, LCS
Domenica Nieto, Research Assistant, LCS

Welcome and Introductions

Senator Stewart welcomed the council, and council members introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made and approved, the council adopted the minutes of the April 28, 2025 meeting of the council as submitted.

Interim Committee Work Plans and Budgets

Interim committee work plans and budgets were presented by LCS staff.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$56,593 for voting members, \$156,796 for advisory members and \$10,000 for expert testimony for the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee were approved as submitted.

At the request of a council member, the work plan of the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee was amended to include a discussion of harm to self and others in Section K. The committee's meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$93,058 for voting members and \$133,971 for advisory members were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$22,391 for voting members and \$22,635 for advisory members for the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$83,448 for voting members and \$92,764 for advisory members for the Economic and Rural Development and Policy Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$36,761 for voting members, \$15,469 for advisory members and \$5,000 for expert testimony for the Investments and Pensions Oversight Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$33,246 for voting members, \$10,389 for advisory members and \$3,000 for expert testimony for the Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$17,909 for voting members, \$28,170 for advisory members and

\$5,000 for expert testimony for the Mortgage Finance Authority Act Oversight Committee were approved as submitted.

At the request of a council member, the work plan of the Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee was amended to include a discussion of destination-based sourcing. The committee's meeting schedule and a budget of \$87,319 for voting members, \$27,137 for standing advisory members and \$10,000 for expert testimony were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$113,348 for voting members and \$147,362 for advisory members for the Water and Natural Resources Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule and a budget of \$41,261 for voting members and \$26,830 for advisory members for the Land Grant Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$46,604 for voting members, \$46,008 for advisory members and \$3,000 for expert testimony for the Science, Technology and Telecommunications Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule and a budget of \$34,148 for voting members for the Public School Capital Outlay Oversight Task Force were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$76,371 for voting members and \$56,173 for advisory members for the Indian Affairs Committee were approved as submitted.

At the request of a council member, the work plan for the Transportation Infrastructure Revenue Subcommittee was amended to include discussions on funding-related legislation from the 2025 legislative session and uninsured motorist insurance coverage. The subcommittee's meeting schedule (including two meetings outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$52,153 for voting members, \$38,812 for advisory members and \$5,000 for expert testimony were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule and a budget of \$8,825 for voting members and \$7,613 for advisory members for the Tobacco Settlement Revenue Oversight Committee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule (including a meeting outside the State Capitol after September 30) and a budget of \$52,494 for voting members and \$6,951 for advisory members for the Federal Funding Stabilization Subcommittee were approved as submitted.

The work plan, meeting schedule and a budget of \$7,088 for voting members for the Legislative Interim Committee Working Group were approved as submitted.

The work plan and a budget of \$20,086 for two one-day meetings of the Interim Legislative Ethics Committee were approved as submitted. Other meetings may be funded out of interim expenses as needed.

The work plan and a budget of \$7,520 for up to two meetings in Santa Fe for the Capitol Security Subcommittee were approved as submitted.

Ms. Casebier stated that there were two requests related to the interim that could be included in a motion to adopt work plans. The first request was authorization for the LCS to expend up to \$15,000 to contract with a third-party facilitator to assist with the Senate Memorial 2 (2025) Wildfire Study Group; the second sought authorization for the LCS to pay mileage and per diem for legislators who have been appointed to serve on and attend the House Memorial 2 (2025) Education Data Governance and Artificial Intelligence Working Group. She noted that both of these expenses would be paid from the interim expenses fund appropriated in House Bill 1 (2025).

Council members discussed the work plans. A member requested that presentations at interim committee meetings be objective and that members of the minority party be allowed to request presenters. A member questioned if funding for expert witnesses has increased this year and requested a report at the end of the interim on how the funding was spent.

On a motion made and passed, the council approved the interim committee work plans, authorized the funding for the Wildfire Study Group facilitator and approved the mileage and per diem for the Education Data Governance and Artificial Intelligence Working Group.

Senator Stewart announced the appointment of three superintendents — Rhiannon Chavez, Steve Carlson and Ignacio Ruiz — to the Public School Capital Outlay Oversight Task Force. On a motion made and passed, the council approved the appointments.

Legislative District Offices

Ms. Casebier discussed the district office working group's proposed revisions to Legislative Council Policy No. 27, Legislative District Offices, which would create a discretionary budget for each district legislative office. This budget could be used to pay district legislative aides' (DLAs) mileage and per diem for in-state travel and/or additional office supplies and equipment. The working group proposed that each district office receive \$2,500, administered by the LCS; the funds would be monitored by the LCS and the working group.

Ms. Casebier informed the council that there are two items the working group would like the Legislative Council to consider: revising the policy language to allow for discretionary budgets for district offices and setting an initial amount for the budgets.

In response to questions from the council, Ms. Casebier explained that the working group could not agree if out-of-state travel should be reimbursed by the discretionary fund and thus the

policy is currently limited to in-state travel. She acknowledged that the proposed \$2,500 budget would likely not be enough for out-of-state events.

Members of the council expressed concern that large rural districts require more travel than small urban districts and will not have the same amount of discretionary funds to enhance their offices. Some members stated that forgoing an office and diverting funds from rent to per diem and mileage may be preferable in large districts.

In response to questions from a member relating to a DLA traveling a large district, Ms. Casebier explained that per diem and mileage are provided for irregular travel, which does not include commuting to a DLA's district office. Ms. Casebier stated that more than one DLA per district was not envisioned when DLAs were proposed; district office budgets were originally envisioned to account for district size, but the idea became unworkable. She explained that the working group intends to review budget usage data to provide for a possible funding differential for large districts.

Members requested clarification of the process for approving DLAs' travel and Ms. Casebier explained that DLAs must complete the paperwork required of state employees and receive authorization from their supervising legislator via email; a handbook detailing the process is provided to all DLAs, and the forms are available electronically.

In response to questions, Ms. Casebier stated that if the policy revisions are approved, the discretionary budgets would be available after July 1 and that the Gift Act and the Governmental Conduct Act both apply to DLA and lobbyist interactions.

In response to questions from the council, Ms. Casebier stated that the working group continues to discuss whether DLAs may work the legislative session; however, if a DLA travels to the State Capitol for official business on an irregular basis, then mileage could be reimbursed through the discretionary budget. Ms. Casebier explained that purchases through the discretionary fund must follow the Procurement Code and other state law; subscriptions to services has not been considered by the working group, but may be eligible for reimbursement.

Members expressed a desire to use discretionary funds to purchase office decor, such as the state seal, to differentiate a district office from standard offices.

On a motion made and approved, the revisions to Legislative Council Policy No. 27, Legislative District Offices, and a budget of \$2,500 per office were adopted. The adopted policy can be found here:

www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/ALC%20062325%20Item%204%20Proposed%20Legislative%20District%20Offices%20changes.pdf.

Legislative Staff Code of Conduct

Ms. Casebier stated that after the council adopted revisions prohibiting legislative staff from campaigning for or holding political office at the January 20, 2025 Legislative Council meeting, several returning session staff were discovered to serve in a variety of elected offices; this prompted the working group to revisit the Code of Conduct. Ms. Casebier stated that the district office working group's compromise proposal adjusts the prohibition to apply only to elected offices with the state and political subdivisions of the state, which would exclude tribal offices, and removes temporary session staff from the prohibition.

Members discussed the implications of and possible changes to the proposal, including:

- whether holding nonpartisan office might be excluded from the prohibition;
- whether the prohibition is too restrictive on an employee's private time;
- members' concerns related to creating any exceptions to the Code of Conduct;
- the difficulty of meeting the needs of a small community with a limited population; and
- the possibility of losing experienced staff with political experience.

On a motion made and passed unanimously, the council voted to send the Legislative Staff Code of Conduct back to the legislative staff working group for additional revision.

Classification Plan and Salary Ranges

Ms. Casebier stated that Legislative Council Policy No. 20, Year-Round Legislative Staff Classification and Compensation Plan, instructs the fiscal and policy research analyst of the LCS and the chief economist of the Legislative Finance Committee to make recommendations on staff salary ranges, subject to approval and revision by the Legislative Council. They recommend that compensation ranges increase by 4%, as the 4% salary increase passed in the most recent budget is consistent with inflation, cost-of-living and cost-of-labor increases across the United States. Ms. Casebier stated that a compensation range increase does not mean salaries automatically increase, although all state employees will receive a 4% raise due to the aforementioned statewide increase appropriated by the legislature.

A member expressed concern that employees may not reach the midpoint of a pay band if compensation ranges increase to match annual statewide ranges and expressed a desire that the evaluation look more broadly at increases to compensation ranges and adding tiers to the DLA position. Ms. Casebier noted that the LCS's Human Resources department is in the process of creating job descriptions for all the positions listed on the compensation and classification plan, which will allow an independent auditing contractor to ensure that the duties listed in a description align with what an employee in that position is actually doing.

In response to a question, Ms. Casebier explained that all new hires are limited to a salary equal to 75% of the maximum salary of the pay band unless specific exceptions are met and approvals received, as set out in the Laws and Policies of the Legislative Council. She noted that Legislative Policy No. 27, Legislative District Offices, specifically states that DLAs may be

hired at no more than 75% of the maximum for classification E, which was instituted to act as a starting point. She stated that no DLAs have received an exemption to be hired at more than 75% of the maximum salary.

In response to concerns that a DLA might leave employment due to meeting the maximum of the compensation range, Ms. Casebier stated that the policy has been in place for approximately one year and will continue to be reviewed and revised to meet members' concerns.

A member expressed the hope that the LCS would complete studies similar to those performed by the State Personnel Office to ensure that positions remain competitive.

In response to a question from the council, Ms. Casebier explained that if a legislator no longer serves in the legislator's position, the DLA remains on staff and is supervised by the appropriate leadership office until the legislative vacancy is filled.

On a motion made and unanimously approved, the council adopted the 4% increases to the compensation ranges. The adopted compensation ranges can be found here:

www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/ALC%20062325%20Item%206%20Proposed%20classificationJul01.25.pdf.

Executive Session

On a motion made and passed, the council went into executive session to discuss security issues for legislators.

On a motion made and passed, the council dissolved the executive session.

Staff Reports

Ms. Casebier asked that legislators notify LCS staff if they plan to attend or not attend committee meetings. Responses allow staff to know whether meetings should be held or canceled.

Ms. Casebier stated that the 2025 Lorenzo de Zavala Youth Legislative Session for New Mexico high school students was held at the State Capitol and was allowed use of the chambers and committee rooms.

Ms. Casebier announced that the stucco replacement project for the State Capitol building is currently in progress and is anticipated to be finished in the mid-to-late fall.

Ms. Casebier announced the establishment of an email account dedicated to bill drafting requests from legislators and authorized staff. The email is lcsdrafting@nmlegis.gov.

A member expressed concern that restrooms in the building may not be safe and hoped that the council would make more than just physical changes.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the council, the meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.