

LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION

November 21, 2022

Presented to the Courts, Corrections, & Justice Committee

Research by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer

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Agenda

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Study Overview

In spring 2022, the New Mexico legislature appropriated funds for FY 2022 to The University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) to investigate legislative modernization, focusing on three primary topics: staffing resources, legislator compensation, and session length & scope.

The funding was put forth by Representatives Garratt and Rubio with junior appropriation monies. Their work shaped the primary topics for the study but asked BBER to generate the research using non-partisan sources, including the legislative staff agencies such as the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), the Legislative Council Service (LCS), and national entities such as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

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Report Structure and Delivery

Three Primary Research Topics

- ❑ Staffing
- ❑ Legislator Compensation
- ❑ Session Length & Scope

We have been working with the LFC and LCS to determine current costs, the factors impacting the costs of each topic, and potential cost-saving measures for each of the above.

Our report will include cost estimates for various scenarios of each of the above topics.

Background & Comparison

- ❑ We are also working with various groups, including the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), to generate the following:
 - ❑ A brief overview of New Mexico legislation on the primary topics that did NOT pass into law.
 - ❑ How other select states compare to New Mexico.
 - ❑ Basic demographic profiles of the new legislature over time.

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Study Overview

Objectives

- ❑ Assess legislative staffing roles, needs, and goals from both the staff and legislator perspectives.
- ❑ Identify how the time legislators spend on legislative tasks is allocated and compensated.
- ❑ Analyze what barriers may exist for fulfilling legislative responsibilities.
- ❑ Generate cost estimates for potential changes to legislative staffing, legislator compensation, and session shifts.
- ❑ Compare New Mexico's legislative structure to comparable states throughout the United States.

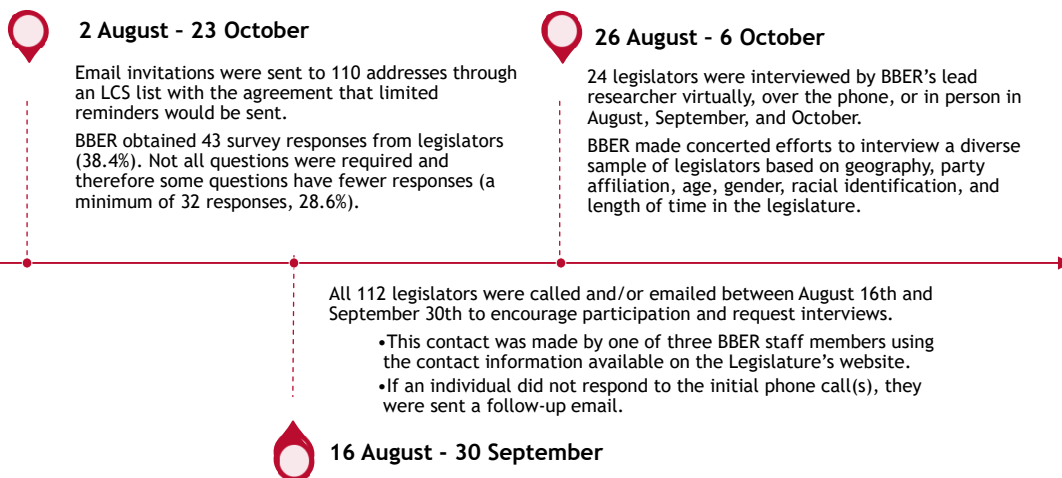
Limits

- ❑ The study will not offer recommendations for legislative action.
- ❑ The primary data collected from legislators and staff is voluntary and therefore may not be a perfect representative sample of the legislature, though we made many efforts to reach a diversity of voices.
- ❑ Each objective has multiple moving pieces; our cost analyses will reflect a variety of scenarios but cannot capture all possible iterations.

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Methodology

Legislators



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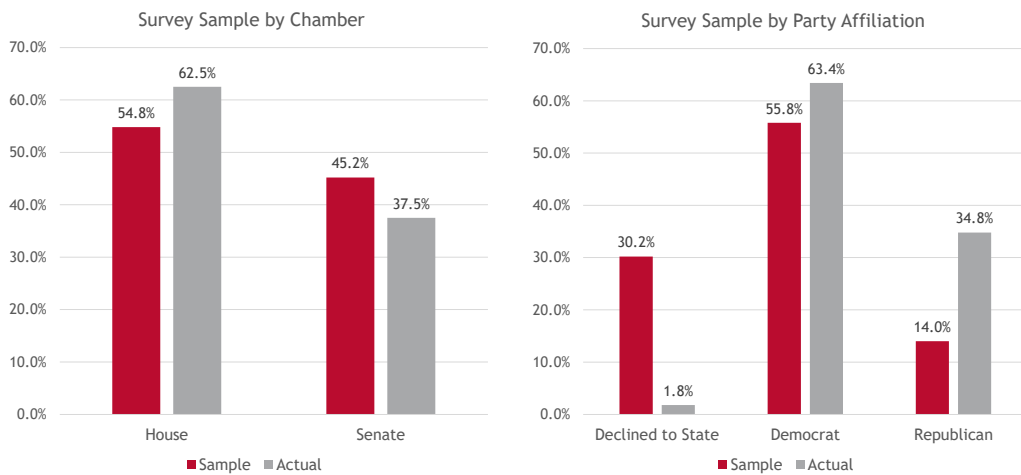
Methodology

Staff

- ▶ Upper-level staff in all legislative offices were contacted in May and June 2022 to request interviews.
 - ▶ Nine interviews were conducted with between June 3rd and July 28th.
- ▶ A survey was sent to staff lists from various legislative offices on August 23rd. The survey remained available until October 23rd.
 - ▶ 216 staff received the survey, including building services and session-only staff, though the contact list for the latter was limited due to their impermanent position.
 - ▶ 96 responses were received by the deadline, representing 44.4% of those surveyed.

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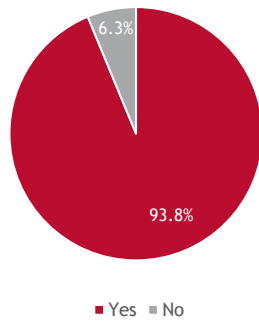
Methodology Highlight: Legislator Survey



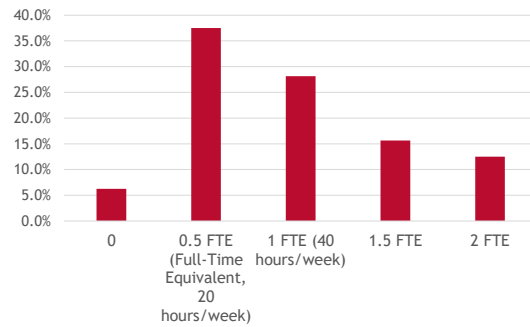
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Preliminary Findings: Staffing

Do you feel that individually-assigned staff could provide you with services that are not currently provided by legislative staff?

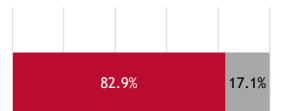


Assuming there was a budget or allowance to pay for individual staff, how many staff do you feel you would need to perform your job most effectively?

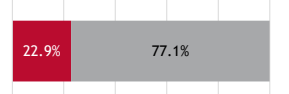


Preliminary Findings: Compensation

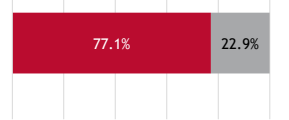
Should Legislators be paid a salary in New Mexico?



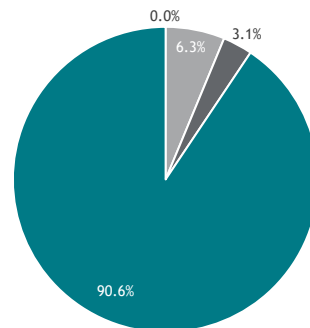
Does the current per diem and travel compensation you receive cover your expenses for Legislative duties?



If Legislators receive a salary, should they also receive per diem and travel?



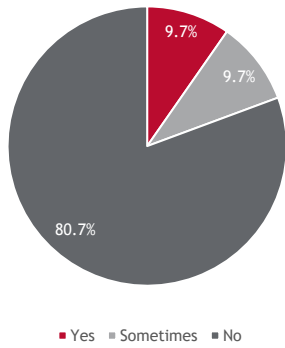
Approximately how many days do you do Legislative work annually without claiming per diem?



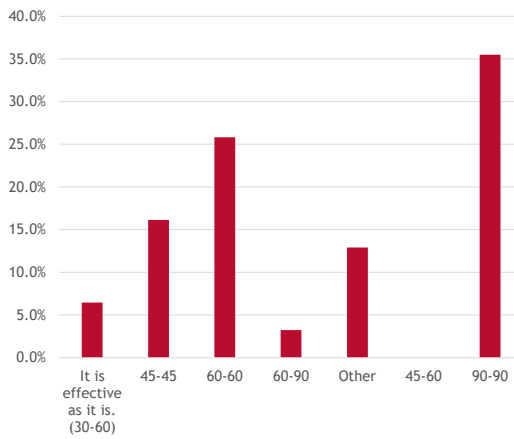
■ 0-9 days ■ 10-19 days ■ 20-29 days ■ 30 or more days

Preliminary Findings: Session Length & Scope

Given the current session structure, do you feel you have enough time in your role as a Legislator to review, research, analyze, and draft bills or amendments, listen to and consider public input in detail and in depth, debate the impact of legislation with your colleagues during Committee Hearings, and on the floor and vote on Legislation?



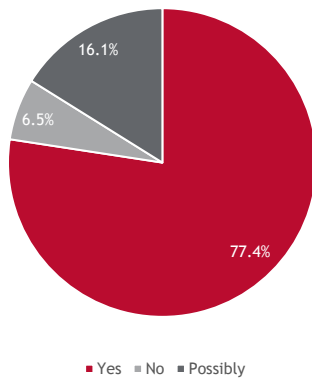
In your opinion, what would be the most effective session length given the tasks and responsibilities of the Legislature?



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Preliminary Findings: Session Length & Scope

Should the limitation on scope of session to budget matters and the call of the Governor in even-numbered years of the biennium be eliminated or changed?



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Concluding Thoughts

- ❑ New Mexico is the only state to not provide a salary to its legislators and ranks near the bottom for overall legislator compensation, though it does not have the lowest overall compensation nationally.
- ❑ There is widespread support for additional, more targeted staffing solutions, especially at a regional or localized level.
 - ❑ Based on the interviews, rural and urban legislators may have different needs for staff, and this will need to be taken into consideration.
- ❑ Session length is a major concern as legislators expressed feeling both overworked and not having enough time to deal with the problems facing New Mexicans as effectively as they would like.
- ❑ Most of the participants in this research, whether staff or legislators, see the need for change, but agreeing to the specific changes will involve collaboration and compromise.

BUREAU OF BUSINESS & ECONOMIC RESEARCH



Thank you!

Contact: Rose Elizabeth Rohrer
rrohrer@unm.edu
505.277.7068