

March 10, 2026

HOUSE EXECUTIVE MESSAGE NO. 97

The Honorable Javier Martínez, Speaker of the House and
Members of the House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Honorable Speaker Martínez and Members of the House:

I have decided to veto HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL 180, as amended (“HB 180”). New Mexico is strongest when the Executive and Legislature collaborate to protect our communities and manage the State’s finances, especially in unprecedented emergency situations. During my Administration, we have faced once-in-a-lifetime challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon fires and subsequent floods, and the Roswell and Ruidoso fires and floods. As we have seen over and over again, these emergencies often do not happen slowly. They happen all at once when—for example—torrential rain falls and devastates a community overnight.

Last Session, the Legislature furthered our shared commitment to protecting New Mexico with Senate Bill 31 (“SB 31”), which created dedicated funding sources for both local and statewide natural disasters. SB 31 provided a structured approach to disaster financing, improving preparedness and ensuring that life-saving actions, quick responses, and long-term recovery efforts are not hindered by procedural and budgetary issues. It started our move away from funding large-scale disaster responses through executive orders, a practice we all agree is inefficient when responding to events like Roswell’s historic flooding or the devastating Calf Canyon/Hermit’s Peak Fire started by the federal government’s negligence.

HB 180 would divert us from the positive path we charted together in SB 31 and would undermine our ability to respond when the next community needs our help and needs it fast. Specifically, HB 180 is problematic in three key ways:

First, HB 180 intrudes on the Executive’s ability and responsibility to respond swiftly to and manage emergencies by imposing an arbitrary cap on emergency funding that forces local, natural, and non-natural disasters to compete for limited appropriations. Emergencies do not occur

sequentially or neatly fit within static fiscal ceilings; they cluster, cascade, and evolve. A hard cap will cause avoidable delays, create zero-sum tradeoffs among communities in crisis, and impair unified incident command and resource allocation—core functions the Executive must execute swiftly to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure. Requiring 112 members of the Legislature to travel from across the State to Santa Fe and debate a vote allowing additional emergency funding for future disasters of unknown magnitude is simply unworkable and a disservice to New Mexicans in need.

Second, HB 180 eliminates the Department of Finance and Administration’s (“DFA’s”) authority to utilize existing local natural disaster loan funds for supporting additional local disaster projects. This flexibility is crucial for DFA to help quickly mobilize resources when needs surge, efficiently layer funding, and bridge gaps in timing and scope across federal, state, and local programs. Removing DFA’s access to this tool would hinder aid delivery, diminish strategic use of limited funds, and weaken our ability to handle simultaneous local emergencies.

Third, HB 180 would undermine the State’s ability to manage reserves, avoid unconstitutional deficits, and prevent default on existing debt obligations approved by both the Legislature and voters. By narrowing fiscal flexibility and pitting essential emergency responses against one another under an inflexible cap, HB 180 increases the risk of midyear imbalances, erodes prudent reserve management, and heightens exposure to liquidity stress precisely when fast, scalable deployment of funds is needed to protect credit, honor bond covenants, and maintain public trust.

In sum, HB 180 introduces structural delays at precisely the moment when speed and flexibility matter most. Its categorization of disasters into constrained, siloed funding pools, coupled with added red tape, risks hobbling the Executive’s capacity to stand up emergency measures efficiently. Our constituents expect—and deserve—a government that can act swiftly and decisively, unconstrained by procedural drag.

Let me be clear: this veto is not about me or my ability to respond to emergencies, as it does not take effect until the next administration. But SB 31 already put us on a better path. I believe in the concept of HB 180, but I believe the Legislature should spend additional time in the interim to develop a workable process.

Because of these issues, and pursuant to my authority under Article IV, Section 22 of the New Mexico Constitution, I have vetoed HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL 180, as amended, enacted by the Fifty-Seventh Legislature, Second Session, 2026.

Respectfully yours,

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Time: _____ a.m. p.m.

Date: _____ 2026

By _____
Secretary of State

Time: _____ a.m. p.m.

Date: _____ 2026

By _____
Chief Clerk of the House