

Meeting notes

November 14, 2022

Note taker: Dottie Indyke

Huge congratulations to all of us for helping to stop the predicted red wave in the 2022 midterms. The Senate will retain the majority in the Senate and Gabe Vasquez won in CD2! Toasts all around.

Lauren Oertel our Indivisible coordinator also congratulated our group, which she said is one of the strongest in New Mexico and in the country. We are making a real difference.

Cindy Pabst told a story about bipartisan relationships she developed while being a poll protector on election day. Monica asked if we might meet with some of these Republicans.

Rachel Feldman updated the group on her recent, serious health problems. She's inviting members to visit since she is unable to do much right now.

Rachel reported on the bill she has been working to create a system for law enforcement training, including overhauling the curriculum, review misconduct, financial appropriations, etc. The bill will be presented to a legislative committee on Tuesday, 11/22, time to be announced. Rachel is asking members to attend in person. Sandy will circulate details when they are known.

Lauren will let Sandy know Indivisible national's plans for texting for Sen. Raphael Warnock so we can participate. Seventeen members volunteered to text. Sandy has put together a list of members who will write a total of 2,500 postcards for Warnock in Georgia.

Ginny Barsky is still in the hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Please send her texts or call.

Sandy introduced Stacy Foster, who was joining us for the first time and may decide to become a member.

Upcoming speakers: Dec 5, Cathy Wiseman and Braver Angels; Dec 12, Lauren Oertel, Indivisible

Holiday party: December 18

The group discussed the best date for our annual holiday gathering. Most favored a Sunday afternoon. Ricann reported back that Betsy can host this party on Sunday, Dec. 18 from 3-6 pm.

Rep. Matthew McQueen

Our speaker today is Rep. Matthew McQueen, NM district 50, which has recently been redistricted to include all of SF County. McQueen will lose 40 percent of current constituents.

McQueen, a lawyer, currently chairs the House committee on energy, environment and natural resources but that may change under new House leadership this January. He has a strong interest in wildlife and resource conservation.

He is working to expand the mission of the Game and Fish Department to include conservation, rather than simply hunting and fishing. He would like to make the Game commission advisory and move game/fish to the agency that oversees parks, minerals, etc. He wants to reform the Gaming Commission so its members are wildlife professionals, not just political appointees. In NM, policy and funding come from separate agencies and McQueen see this as a fundamental flaw in the structure. Work on water needs to be consolidated under one entity with consistent, adequate funding, which is not currently the case.

Rep. Andrea Romero has put forth a bill that requires the state engineer's office to consider climate change in all planning.

He expects that a hydrogen bill will return this session but doesn't know where it will be introduced. He opposes hydrogen in NM.

There is a national bill, Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), which, if passed, will provide matching funding to states on the order of approximately \$3 federal to \$1 NM.

In response to a question about water conservation, McQueen said that the biggest division is between the state engineer and the environment department with overlapping responsibilities. It would make more sense for these entities to be under one umbrella. We face a major affordable housing shortage in NM and the accompanying need for water. He is advocating for planning strategically rather than haphazardly.

In response to a question about offering incentives to conserve water, Rep. McQueen said that sometimes the admin costs and logistics of incentives (i.e. free rain barrels) are overwhelming and don't make financial sense. He believes we should build requirements into construction permits and should ensure that ponding, permeable pavements and other conservation measures are instituted in all projects.

The group discussed agriculture and water and the "use it or lose it" philosophy. McQueen said this is a very complex issue because of property rights. Senior water rights are attached to the best farmland. When more water is put into streams for wildlife and recreation, that water is snapped up by farmers with junior water rights.

McQueen thinks that the burden of responsibility for resource conservation should be on corporations and oil producers. He is trying to facilitate an economic transition, with renewables outcompeting fossil fuels.

There was a brief discussion of the need to educate the public on conservation, especially of water.

The governor has tended to keep the legislator at arm's length and he would like to see executive and legislative working more as partners. Rep McQueen also said that the election cycle, bumping up against holidays and the start of the session, makes planning and legislating very challenging. When asked about measures to professionalize the legislature, he said it is more likely that changes will be incremental.

Bills will begin being introduced in late December. Given our short legislative sessions, it is especially difficult to get a bill passed.