

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (letter attached)

March 25, 2021

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MLG pushing for ‘holy grail’ pot bill, while blocking Easter holiday again for second year

Santa Fe, NM- House Republican Leader Jim Townsend (Artesia), Whip Rod Montoya (Farmington), and Caucus Chair Rebecca Dow (TorC) questioned Governor Lujan Grisham’s decision to put Easter on the backburner again. Last year the governor’s administration was fiercely criticized after closing churches on Easter Sunday. Now, just days before Palm Sunday, the Governor continues to show her contempt for Holy Week and its significance to traditional New Mexicans. She has once again decided to preempt the Christian holiday, but this time it is to pass her “holy grail” pot legislation.

“Does she realize that it’s Holy Week? We’ll likely end up working through Good Friday or possibly Easter Sunday.” said House Republican Whip Rod Montoya (Farmington). “The governor’s priorities and those of average New Mexicans are 180 degrees out of phase. The public is not in a mad panic to get recreational marijuana legalized, especially when it will cost taxpayers \$83,000 a day to do it.”

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State of New Mexico
House of Representatives

State Capitol
Santa Fe

March 24, 2021

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor, State of New Mexico
State Capitol, Room 400
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Governor:

We are writing to express our strong disappointment regarding your plan to call a special session of the Legislature on or about March 31. Picking a date during Holy Week appears to be a cynical attempt of using Easter to pressure legislators to cave to your political desires if they want to spend the Easter holiday at home with their families. As you are well aware, Easter holds a special and unique significance for many New Mexico families and to use our most sacred holiday as leverage to further your effort to legalize a psychoactive drug is unconscionable.

Calling a special session less than two weeks after the completion of the regular 60-day session is also troubling as special sessions should only be called to deal with an emergency or unique event that requires the Legislature's quick attention. Traditionally, special sessions in New Mexico are called in order to take action on a budget emergency, such as an unexpected decline in revenues or fiscal consequences of an economic downturn, such as last June and November's special sessions which were necessary to deal with the economic shutdown. A special session should never be considered as a convenient extension of a regular session whose sole purpose is to continue deliberations on legislation that is neither essential nor related to an economic crisis.

Frankly, calling a special session in late March knowing the Legislature will be forced to pay an additional \$33,000 a day to keep the State Capitol fenced off with armed State Police and National Guard, bringing the total cost of the Special Session to a whopping \$83,000 a day is just plain irresponsible.

Knowing that the Legislature will also continue to restrict the public's participation until your health orders are withdrawn and operate under the constraints of virtual committee hearings and floor sessions only shows further contempt for all New Mexicans. Instead, you could wait to call a special session until these restrictions are lifted and the public is able to fully participate. Since the effective date contained in the last version of the marijuana legalization bill is not until April 2022, what is the rush in calling a special session within the next seven days?

Finally, we feel compelled to comment on recent media reports which indicate you may add more than the legalization of marijuana to the special session agenda. As we stated earlier, special sessions should only be utilized to consider essential or economically-related legislative items and we are not aware of any unfinished legislation from the 60-day session that meets that criteria. We believe the more issues legislators are required to discuss will only add to the frustration legislators already have over being forced to return to Santa Fe so soon after the 60-day session. As we recently witnessed on the Senate floor, feverish emotions within the legislative process are not conducive to a productive session.

While we strongly maintain the upcoming special session is unnecessary and a waste of taxpayers' money, we hope you will exercise some restraint in regards to your ability to call a special session. The people have a right to express their views on how New Mexico is governed and, by delaying the special session and keeping the agenda limited, it would send a strong signal to the people that their involvement in the legislative process is highly valued and essential to good lawmaking.

Thank you for your time. As always, we stand ready to work with your Administration in making New Mexico a better place to raise a family and to improve the economic future of all New Mexicans.

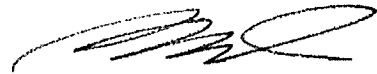
Sincerely yours,



James G. Townsend
Republican Leader



Rod Montoya
Republican Whip



Rebecca Dow
Caucus Chair