



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Nora Meyers Sackett  
Press Secretary, Office of the Governor  
[nora.sackett@state.nm.us](mailto:nora.sackett@state.nm.us)  
(505) 690-7313

July 29, 2021

## **Two new secretaries appointed**

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Thursday announced two new members of the state Cabinet:

- **Jason Bowie**, deputy chief of the Rio Rancho Police Department, as secretary of the Department of Public Safety; and
- **Kurt A. Steinhaus**, educator, education administrator and recently retired superintendent of Los Alamos Public Schools, as secretary of the Public Education Department.

Bowie will relieve **Timothy Q. Johnson**, who has led the department in an acting capacity since late September 2020. Prior to that, Johnson, a 21-year veteran of the state police, had served as deputy secretary and chief of New Mexico State Police, a division of the state public safety agency. He will return to that leadership role under Bowie; **Robert Thornton**, who served as chief while Johnson served as acting secretary, will return to his previous role as deputy chief.

Steinhaus, who retired from the Los Alamos school district in June, will take over for **Secretary Ryan Stewart**, who has led the public education agency since August 2019. Stewart will step down from his position at the end of August to address family health issues.

“New Mexicans are fortunate to have deeply qualified women and men who are willing to step up and serve our state in leadership roles all across state government,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “These are not easy jobs. A pandemic doesn’t make them any easier. New Mexicans expect a lot from their leaders. I do, too. I’m grateful to Jason and Kurt for their willingness to serve, I’m excited about their passion for solving problems and thinking outside the box, and I am very much looking forward to working with them on the issues that matter to New Mexicans.”

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Bowie, 49, has worked in New Mexico law enforcement for decades, serving with the Rio Rancho Police Department for 27 years, climbing to the rank of deputy chief in 2019. In 1994 he began his public safety career as an officer in the patrol division, serving 10 years in that role and earning “officer of the year” commendation in 2003. He was promoted in 2005 to the rank of sergeant, supervising the patrol division. He was reassigned and tasked to develop a “Special

Services Unit” composed of plainclothes officers responsible for the investigation and apprehension of violent and repeat offenders in both Rio Rancho and the metro area. The assignment required extensive partnership and collaboration with state and federal agencies including New Mexico State Police, the Albuquerque Police Department, the FBI, DEA, U.S. Marshals service and the Region I Drug Task Force. Concurrently he also developed and implemented the agency’s first SWAT K9 unit. In 2010, Bowie was promoted to lieutenant and in 2014 to captain, in which roles he served as SWAT commander and department operations commander, respectively, in addition to myriad other managerial, administrative and leadership duties. Since 1995 Bowie has served as a SWAT team member, and eventually SWAT team leader, attaining the positions of sergeant, lieutenant and SWAT commander, successively, over the course of more than 23 years. As commander he has successfully managed critical incidents and coordinated staffing and training as well as having contributed to the agency’s SWAT budgeting process. Bowie’s extensive and varied training history includes instructor certifications and management training courses in diversity, equity and inclusion; implicit bias for law enforcement; constitutional policing; active shooter executive management; and more.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to serve my fellow New Mexicans in this role,” **Bowie** said. “I’ve been fortunate in my law enforcement career to have the experience of both an officer on the beat building relationships with a community and an administrator working to support those officers and uphold the mission to protect and serve. Too many New Mexicans know the pain and hardship caused by violent crime. And New Mexicans expect and deserve public safety officers who are committed to the communities they serve, impeccably trained and fully accountable to the public. The Department of Public Safety and the sworn women and men of the New Mexico State Police work tirelessly in every corner of our state every single day to make a positive difference – and to root out and prevent violent crime and hold those criminals accountable. That work will continue, and my expectation is that we will think outside the box and work closely with local law enforcement agencies and community stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to help us move forward and reduce recidivism and ameliorate the conditions that lead to violent criminal behavior.”

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Steinhaus, 67, has led a lengthy and distinguished career in New Mexico public education, most recently as superintendent of Los Alamos Public Schools, the position from which he retired in May of this year. Steinhaus began as a classroom educator, teaching at Alamogordo Public Schools from 1976 through 1988, where he also served as a department chair. Subsequently, in addition to teaching courses at Santa Fe Community College and the University of New Mexico, he was hired at what was then known as the state Department of Education as an educational consultant in the assessment and evaluation unit. From 1988 through 1999, he was promoted at the agency into varied leadership roles, including stints as state director of educational technology, director of the state data management unit, chief information officer and assistant superintendent for accountability and information services, in that time facilitating strategic planning about public education in New Mexico and managing budgets and staffing for program development, educational technology and interventions and incentive for school improvement. From 1999 through 2008, he worked as both director of student and education programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory and deputy Cabinet secretary of the state Public Education Department, in the latter role managing the multibillion-dollar agency budget and contributing to a new state pre-k initiative. As director of community programs at the lab, from 2008 through 2016, he worked with area Northern New Mexico school districts to advance the quality of classroom teaching and improve student achievement in math and science education. From 2016 through the end of the spring semester this year, he was superintendent of Los Alamos Public Schools, leading the high-performing district to some of the state’s best graduation rates. Steinhaus holds master’s degrees from the University of Oregon, in science, and Eastern New Mexico University, in music, as well as a doctorate of education from the University of New

Mexico, where he produced a dissertation on studying statewide intervention strategies for educational technology in New Mexico schools.

“It’s a distinct and deeply humbling privilege to have this opportunity to work hand-in-hand with so many incredible educators, superintendents and families to make a difference for our students,” **Steinhaus** said. “I’ve spent most of my adult life building strong teams that can inspire and support real progress in New Mexico classrooms. I believe this administration has made some real progress – and more importantly put our state in a position to sustain and build upon the record strategic investments in students and educators and improved outcomes. There is no doubt in my mind that we have the tools we need to be successful, no matter the challenges. I can’t wait to get the school year started, with students safely back in classrooms full-time all across our state, and I greatly look forward to serving the students and school communities of New Mexico every single day.”

Stewart will have served more than two full years in his leadership role at the time of his departure Aug. 20. As secretary, he secured more than \$1 billion in new resources for the expansion of key programs and supports for students and educators, including extended school year programs, CTE programs, community schools and investments in technology. Under Stewart, PED, among other initiatives, revamped its assessment system and included more options like a free and universal SAT exam for all secondary students; trained thousands of educators and administered raises for educators while successfully decreasing teacher vacancies and implementing a new educator evaluation system; established a citizen-led equity council in every district in the state; and began the rollout of a new strategic plan designed to address the findings of Yazzie-Martinez.

“Secretary Stewart has been an action-oriented advocate for New Mexico students, educators, districts and charters,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “Working with the Legislature, superintendents, charter leaders, unions and many more, he has advocated for and succeeded in implementing policies that begin to address the deeply entrenched issues that affect our public education system. As I said, these are not easy jobs, and a pandemic year doesn’t make them any easier; Ryan was willing to step into the arena because he truly cares about students, educators and improving outcomes. The simple fact for all of us is that family comes first, and I know he is looking forward to a change of pace that will allow him more time with his family at an important time for them. I wish him the best on his next chapter.”

“To have had the chance to work with so many outstanding and dedicated students, educators, parents and administrators has been a remarkable experience,” said **Stewart**. “I entered this job with optimism about New Mexico’s ability to meaningfully transform public education, and I leave it with certainty that sustaining the investments we have made in children and school communities will indeed produce that transformation. New Mexico students and educators expect and deserve the very best – because they are the very best. I’m grateful to the governor for this opportunity, to the employees of PED for their tireless work and commitment, and to everyone in the New Mexico public education community for their faith and their willingness to work together for the bright, equitable future we all hope to achieve.”

###