

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2021
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Senate Republican Leaders Request Update on Auditor's Investigation of Governor's Contingency Fund

SANTA FE – Today, Senate Republican leaders sent a follow-up letter to State Auditor Brian Colón requesting an update on his investigation into alleged misuses of taxpayer dollars by the Governor and her staff. In February, a KOB 4 Investigates Team story revealed thousands of dollars in receipts for personal expenses and the purchase of alcohol, Wagyu beef, and tuna steaks. On March 4, Senate Republicans called for a special audit of the Governor's Contingency Fund, and on the same day, the Auditor announced that his office had opened an "examination."

"As legislators, we are responsible for appropriating taxpayer dollars and New Mexicans expect them to be spent responsibly and for their intended purpose," said **Senator Greg Baca** (District 29-Bernalillo and Valencia). "The Governor's use of these funds for personal, lavish purchases was obviously inappropriate and after more than a month, we are anxious to see the Auditor's findings."

"No elected official is above the law and the Auditor has an obligation to protect public funds," added **Senator Craig Brandt** (District 40-Sandoval). "State law clearly defines allowable expenditures from this contingency fund. Expensive alcohol and steaks for the Governor's personal entertainment certainly do not qualify and the Auditor must hold the Governor accountable for her actions."

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New Mexico State Senate

STATE CAPITOL

Santa Fe 87501

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Brian S. Colón
New Mexico State Auditor
2540 Camino Edward Ortiz, Suite A
Santa Fe, NM 87507

Dear Mr. Colón:

This correspondence is a follow-up to our enclosed letter dated March 4, 2021, in which we requested a special audit of the "Governor's Contingency Fund."

On the same day we submitted our letter, you announced publicly that your office had opened an "examination." After more than a month, we have not yet received your findings and we would respectfully request an update on the status of your investigation.

Thank you again for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory A. Baca".

GREGORY A. BACA
State Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig W. Brandt".

CRAIG W. BRANDT
State Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Moores".

MARK MOORES
State Senator

Enclosure



New Mexico State Senate

STATE CAPITOL
Santa Fe 87501

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Brian S. Colón
New Mexico State Auditor
2540 Camino Edward Ortiz, Suite A
Santa Fe, NM 87507

Dear Mr. Colón:

Pursuant to Section 12-6-3 NMSA 1978, we hereby request that the Office of the State Auditor perform an immediate special audit of the "Governor's Contingency Fund." The purpose of the special audit is to determine if Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and/or members of her staff violated the provisions of Section 6-4-26 NMSA 1978.

The alleged misuse of the "Governor's Contingency Fund" has now been reported by multiple local and national media outlets. According to Section 6-4-26 NMSA 1978, "Money in the fund shall not be used to pay or supplement the salary of the governor or any state employee or as perquisites or allowances for state employees." A recent local media investigation, however, revealed that in 2020, approximately \$17,000 from this fund was used for the purchase of liquor and groceries, and for the Governor's personal dry cleaning and shoe and boot repair.

The Governor's spokesperson has previously stated that the purchased food in question was consumed by the Governor and other staff members. These expenses, along with the expenditures for the Governor's personal services, appear to be a supplement, perquisite, and/or allowance, which is prohibited by the statute.

As you are aware, the "Governor's Contingency Fund" is subject to the provisions of the state Audit Act, the Procurement Code, and all other applicable laws and rules. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to initiate this special audit and to release your findings at the earliest possible time.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory A. Baca".

GREGORY A. BACA
State Senator

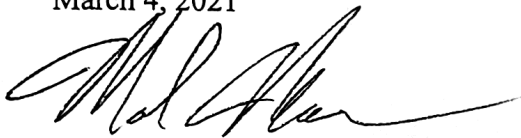
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig W. Brandt".

CRAIG W. BRANDT
State Senator

The Honorable Brian S. Colón

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March 4, 2021



MARK MOORES
State Senator



WILLIAM F. BURT
State Senator



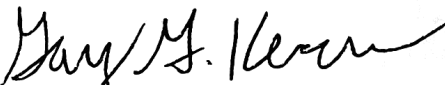
CRYSTAL DIAMOND
State Senator



DAVID M. GALLEGOS
State Senator



RON GRIGGS
State Senator



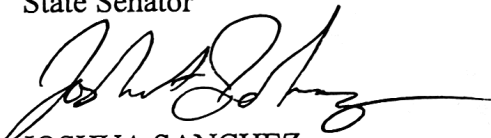
GAY G. KERNAN
State Senator



STEVEN P. NEVILLE
State Senator



CLIFF R. PIRTLE
State Senator



JOSHUA SANCHEZ
State Senator



GREGG SCHMEDES
State Senator



WILLIAM E. SHARER
State Senator



PAT WOODS
State Senator