



Office of the Governor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor meets with local, state fire officials to celebrate new funding for NM firefighters

SANTA FE – Surrounded by Santa Fe County Fire personnel, leaders from the State Fire Marshal’s Office and the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday morning hosted a “signing ceremony” for Senate Bill 256 and Senate Bill 90 at Agua Fria Fire & Rescue in Santa Fe. Physical distancing requirements precluded an in-person event at the time the governor signed the bills in April.

Senate Bill 256 enables local fire departments across New Mexico to access 100 percent of the available capital in the Fire Protection Fund. Before this bill, state law required that most capital in the Fire Protection Fund revert back to the General Fund, which left dozens of New Mexico fire departments — many in rural areas — without the funding they need. In Fiscal Year 2021 alone, firefighters lost out on \$13 million in possible funding.

Effective July 1, those funds can go toward the purchase of essential equipment like water tanks, firetrucks, and protective equipment.

“Every day, local firefighters take on incredible risks and responsibilities to keep our communities safe,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “And over the past year, firefighters have gone above and beyond their typical duties by providing crucial care to those affected by COVID-19, especially people in rural New Mexico. We have a clear responsibility to support local fire departments however we can, and Senate Bill 256 is a major step in ensuring that our firefighters have all the tools and funding they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.”

“Our department was proud to work with the Governor, the State Fire Marshal’s Office, state legislators, and countless firefighters and advocates to make this legislation possible,” said **Homeland Security and Emergency Management Secretary**

Bianca Ortiz-Wertheim. “Now, these funds can go where they are most needed and where they can do the most good.”

“We are really incredibly excited about this funding — it will make a real difference across our state, including here at our Agua Fria station, which was originally built by volunteers,” said **Santa Fe County Fire Chief Jackie Lindsey.** “We’ve outgrown this station, and this law gives us the opportunity to make sure that we can keep growing and that we have the resources we need to protect our community.”

With better-funded fire departments, many New Mexicans may also benefit from lower home insurance premiums. In 2020, the Ranchvale Fire Department used capital from the Fire Protection Fund to purchase a dedicated water system, which helped to significantly improve the area’s ISO rating – a key metric that insurers use to set prices.

“This bill will be especially beneficial to rural and volunteer fire departments that often have the greatest need for additional funding” said **Fire Grant Council Chairperson Robert Larranaga.** “The Grant Council appreciates all the support we received from legislators, the State Fire Marshal, DHSEM, and the International Association of Firefighters in achieving this goal.”

Sponsored by Sen. William Burt and Rep. Gail Armstrong, Senate Bill 256 passed both the House and the Senate with unanimous votes.

The governor and fire personnel also acknowledged the passage and enactment of Senate Bill 90, which ensures the earned benefit for pension service credit for firefighters and their families statewide.

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