

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 27, 2022

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## **House GOP raises concerns over government staffing crisis**

Santa Fe – House Republican Leadership this week requested from the Governor’s office a report of how many state government employees are still working remotely, adding that all state employees should return to their offices as soon as possible. 961 days post-COVID economic shutdowns, it is speculated that only 40% of the some-22,000 state employees have returned to working in-person full time.

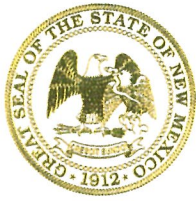
“New Mexicans cannot get a hold of government employees to complete important business in a timely and efficient manner because too many people are not in their offices,” said House Republican Leader Jim Townsend (Artesia). “Our own legislative staff has tremendous trouble making direct contact with many agency staff. It is unacceptable that the people of this state still must make appointments to visit the MVD, wait days if not weeks for a returned phone call, or to simply give up acquiring the services their taxes pay for.”

Leadership offices have reported that many constituent calls are a result of the inability for the public to reach people in government departments. An astonishing account considering New Mexico’s state budget has increased by 34% since Lujan Grisham took office in 2019.

“It has been 961 days since Lujan Grisham imposed her emergency control of New Mexico- 961 days of economic and educational turmoil, not to mention 961 days of New Mexicans being limited in reaching the government services their tax dollars pay for,” said House Republican Caucus Chair Rebecca Dow (T or C). “It is reasonable for a New Mexico taxpayer to expect that government agencies will answer their calls in a timely manner. I am disturbed by the many constituents who report that they simply cannot reach the government offices that will ultimately penalize the citizen for missing deadlines.”

House Republican Leadership’s letter to the Governor is attached to this release.

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State of New Mexico  
House of Representatives

State Capitol  
Santa Fe

October 26, 2022

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:

After nearly two and half years since the pandemic began and with many indicators showing COVID-19 has diminished significantly across New Mexico, we are requesting your office's estimate of the number of state employees who have returned to work full-time in their offices for all state departments and agencies. This information is vitally important in understanding how well state government is operating and whether taxpayers' dollars are being utilized properly to ensure New Mexicans are receiving the state services they deserve. Based upon the constituent calls and emails House Republican Caucus members are receiving, it seems many New Mexicans are having a difficult time reaching state employees in numerous state agencies and departments as no one is answering the phone.

We have heard reports that only about 40 percent of state employees have returned to full-time status by working in their state offices. This number, in our view, is totally unacceptable as nearly every private sector enterprise in New Mexico has required all of their employees to return to work at their place of business and taxpayers should expect the same requirement from state government. Every member of our Caucus is aware of numerous instances where constituents are forced to leave voice mail messages when they contact state agencies and then they wait for a call back that typically is never received. Without a doubt, this is not how state government should treat the people of New Mexico.

With so many state employees having received the COVID vaccine and the various boosters, as well as having access to better anti-viral treatments along with safe office practices, there is frankly no reason for healthy state employees to be still working from home. With President Biden recently saying the pandemic is over, it is time to order all state employees back to their offices as soon as possible so that the operation of state government can return to normal.

We look forward to your office's estimate of how many of the 22,000 state employees are working full-time in their offices. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of James G. Townsend in blue ink.

James G. Townsend  
Republican Leader

Handwritten signature of Rod Montoya in black ink.

Rod Montoya  
Republican Whip

Handwritten signature of Rebecca Dow in black ink.

Rebecca Dow  
Caucus Chair