



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
Santa Fe

GAIL ARMSTRONG

REPUBLICAN CAUCUS CHAIR

R - Catron, Sierra, Socorro & Valencia
District 49

P. O. Box 326
Magdalena, NM 87825

Cell: (505) 269-2364

E-mail: gail@gailfornewmexico.com

COMMITTEES:

Appropriations & Finance
Printing & Supplies
Agriculture, Acequias & Water Resources

March 18, 2024

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

Public Education Department
Arsenio Romero, Secretary
300 Don Gaspar Ave
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Re: Ride-Along Request

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham and Secretary Romero,

With PED's recent announcement that the department is moving forward with mandating a 180-day school schedule for next school year, I am writing to invite you on a ride along with students from Quemado or Reserve as they travel to and from school.

As you know, I objected to the department's adoption of this mandate, which was generally supported by members in the House and Senate. I do, however, share your concerns about our education system. I agree that we must take decisive actions to turn New Mexico's school system around. While the proposed rule appears on its face to provide a good solution to the proficiency problems plaguing the state, education is about differentiating the approach to ensure the system is responsive to everyone it serves.

Your insistence on adopting this rule fails to recognize the achievement many rural schools on a four-day week have. Reserve and Quemado are among the top performing school districts when it comes to ELA proficiency. Reserve students have the 7th highest ELA proficiency in the state and Quemado students have the 13th highest ELA proficiency statewide. In fact, 12 of the 15 school districts that had half or more of their students demonstrating proficiency in the 2022-2023 school year have four-day calendars.

By adopting this one-size-fits-all rule you are neglecting some of the hard realities that come with education in rural New Mexico. Maybe the most notable difference between rural and urban school

districts is the time it takes for kids to get to and from school every day. It is not uncommon for students in rural districts to spend up to two hours a day in transit to and from school. The new rule adopted by PED will only increase the stress these distances place on our students. Witnessing this may help you better understand the concern raised by the thousands of students, teachers, and support staff that spoke against these new rules.

I am a strong supporter of improving student outcomes and have supported education reforms during my tenure in the Legislature and as a former school board member. I look forward to working collaboratively to identify those policies that will impact our students the most while also providing our school districts with the flexibility to meet community expectations.

Please let me know what dates would work for a ride along with students from one of these two districts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail Armstrong".

Gail Armstrong
State Representative District 49