

# 2005 Legislative Update & 2006 Preview

## See Inside for Yellow Questionnaire

*Dear Friends,  
Neighbors & Constituents,*

Happy New Year to you and your family! Here we go again, this year with a short, 30-day legislative session, focused on tax and revenue issues. The session starts Jan. 17th and ends a month later, hopefully, with a budget that balances spending on urgent needs like health care and education with sound investments for the future. This year we have more tax revenue to work with, due to the spike in oil and gas prices. Believe it or not, this sometimes makes it more difficult to budget because this kind of price-dependent revenue is extremely volatile.

The rising energy prices spurred the Governor to call a special session in October to offer assistance to New Mexicans who, just as winter was approaching, were about to be hit with a double whammy-higher gasoline and natural gas prices. The session ended up giving back \$106 million in rebates to taxpayers to make up for high gas prices. The rebate size was dependent on family size and income, ranging from \$64 to \$289. Everyone who filed a tax return should have gotten the rebate by now, but if you didn't, call the Tax and Rev Department at 1-866-285-2996.

The legislature also appropriated \$2.5 million for home weatherization programs and \$23 million in assistance to low income families to help with heating bills through the "LIHEAP" program. More than 60,000 households, whose incomes do not exceed 150% of the federal poverty level (\$29,000 a year for a family of four), will qualify for the program. To see if that includes you, call the Human Services Department at 1-800-432-6217.

I've gotten mixed reactions to the rebates, and the additional tax relief that was added to the Governor's proposals by the Senate. While many think that we should help people with some extra cash while we have the extra revenue, some question whether that will

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Photo by Alex Zarnes

Sen. Feldman reads to 4-year olds at the Albuquerque Pre-School Co-op, a District 13 pre-school chosen to receive state funds for Pre-Kindergarten. One of the key questions of the 2006 session will be whether to fund more Pre-Kindergarten programs.



Thanks to a bill I sponsored in last year's session, you can now sign up to buy a special organ donation license plate. The MVD is currently developing the plate to encourage more people to sign up to donate their organs when they renew their licenses. In 2004 there were only 34 donations in the state, too few for the 400 people who await these lifesaving transplants in New Mexico. For more information on how you can give this gift of life call Maria Sanders at 843-7672.

**2006 Constituent Survey Inside** ➔

# 2005 Legislative Success Stories

Last year I was able to pass a number of measures including:

**ATVs and Off Highway Vehicles:** As of Jan. 1, 2006, SB 252 requires helmets, eye protection and training for kids under 18 who ride all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes. Riders must register their vehicles, carry a safety permit (earned through a certified safety course) and be under parental supervision. Young riders must be on appropriately sized vehicles and cannot carry passengers. The bill sets up a Safety Board and funds new, safe courses and parks.

**A Free, 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line** will be available to all New Mexicans come April, 2006 thanks to SB 206 which funds the "help line" with \$500,000. Anyone can call and talk to a nurse about a health problem and he or she will direct them to the care they need so they won't clog emergency rooms unnecessarily. Stay tuned to Dede's blog site (<http://senatorfeldman.typepad.com/>) for details as they unfold.

**Small Employer Insurance Program (SEIP)** was created by SB 271 to enable non-profits and small employers to obtain affordable health insurance through a program offered through the Health Insurance Alliance. Call **1-800-204-4700** or visit <http://insurenwemexico.state.nm.us/> for more information on the program, which will be up and running in March 2006.

**Insurance Coverage for Young Adults:** SB 269 requires that both individual and group policies allow dependent coverage up to age 25. Unmarried dependents will have the opportunity to remain on their parents plan regardless of student status. Call **1-800-204-4700** or visit <http://insurenwemexico.state.nm.us/> for more information on the program.

**Recycling and Illegal Dumping Act** (SB 142) restricts the disposal of scrap tires and creates a state recycling plan and fund.

**The Gain Program** (SB 145) will enlarge opportunities for non-hunters to access lands administered by the Game and Fish Department for guided bird watching, photo safaris and other special events. To find out what GAIN activities are coming up, and to sign up for a permit, go to [www.wildlife.state.nm.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us). "Gain" stands for Gaining Access to Nature!

**Prescription Drug Discount Program** (SB 689) will eventually create a RX discount card program for people under 65 who don't have drug coverage. Stay tuned for more details.

**Electronic Waste Task Force:** SJM9 created a task force to consider what to

do about the growing problem of discarded computers and other e-waste. The task force included city officials and landfill operators who will pilot a voluntary recycling program.

**Capital Outlay:** Last year I was able to obtain approximately \$2 million in state funding for improvements to District 13 schools, museums, streets, community centers and neighborhoods.



Photo by Oissy Werner



Photo by Suzanne Prescott

Senator Feldman celebrates victory of public financing for city campaigns, a measure similar to one she sponsored at the state level. "Never doubt that a small group of people can change history. Indeed, it's the only thing that has," she says, quoting Margaret Mead.

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address our long-range dependence on foreign gasoline and heating oil. You'll hear more about these issues this session as the Governor unveils a number of alternative energy bills. I intend to offer a solar tax credit proposal as well.

As usual, I need to know your views on these and other issues. Please fill out the attached survey and send it back to me before I leave for the session on Jan. 16th. Don't forget the price of a stamp goes up to 39¢ in Jan. 2006. Or drop by my office in Santa Fe once the session begins. You can also call me in Santa Fe at **1-505-986-4300** or e-mail me at [dede.feldman@nmlegis.gov](mailto:dede.feldman@nmlegis.gov).

One of my resolutions for 2006 is to keep in more regular communication with you through a periodic electronic newsletter, which I hope, will capture the many developments during the interim between sessions. To do so, I need your e-mail address, if you have one. Please write it on the constituent survey or drop me an e-mail at [dede.feldman@nmlegis.gov](mailto:dede.feldman@nmlegis.gov), so I'll have it right there. I'm also starting a "blog" on the web. I've set up the blog so you can enter your own comments and thoughts on any of the topics in the blog. To visit my blog go to <http://senatorfeldman.typepad.com/> or access it through my web site at [www.dedefeldman.com](http://www.dedefeldman.com). It's still in its infancy, so please bear with me through any technical difficulties.

I look forward to seeing you on the web, at the supermarket, around the district, or in Santa Fe. And, as always, I am honored to serve as your Senator in Santa Fe.

Warmest Regards,

*Dede Feldman*  
Dede Feldman

# District 13 Questionnaire

Please check the boxes next to your preferred choices. If more than one person is responding to this survey, please use different color ink for each respondent.

**1. As a result of this year's spike in oil and gas prices, new, recurring revenue for next year is estimated at \$524 million, with almost \$1 billion available for capital projects or one-time spending. This is much more than we've had in the past. Here are some ideas for spending the surplus that have been proposed. What are your priorities?**

(Please rank; 1 is the highest)

- \_\_\_ One-time, big ticket items like a \$50 million investment in an endowment for need-based college scholarships
- \_\_\_ \$300 million for water projects statewide
- \_\_\_ A \$109 million salary package for New Mexico teachers (recurring)
- \_\_\_ \$30 million to provide a network of trauma centers at hospitals around the state
- \_\_\_ Full funding of the state's Medicaid Program, which provides health insurance for low income children and people with disabilities. The program has not been fully funded for the past two years.
- \_\_\_ Elimination of waiting lists for disabled, elderly and medically fragile persons
- \_\_\_ Expansion of pre-kindergarten programs for four-year-olds (started last year) around the state
- \_\_\_ Additional tax cuts
- \_\_\_ Salary updates for State Police and other public employees
- \_\_\_ \$44 million for indigent care at UNM hospital
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**2. In the aftermath of the scandal involving the state Treasurer, a number of ethics and campaign reforms will be considered. Which do you favor? (Please indicate which of the following you support by checking Yes or No)**

- Making the Treasurer and Auditor appointed by the Governor and not elected  Yes  No
- Banning campaign contributions from contractors and others who do business with the Treasurer, Auditor, Land Commissioner, Attorney General and Secretary of State  Yes  No
- Passing a voluntary system of public financing for state candidates who choose to accept spending limits and forgo private contributions (just passed by the city)  Yes  No
- Banning gifts to public officials by persons financially interested in their actions  Yes  No
- Requiring disclosure of expenditures made on behalf of candidates by independent groups  Yes  No

**3. Do you favor the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes?**  
 Yes  No

**4. Do you favor raising the minimum wage?**  Yes  No

If yes, circle the level to which it should be raised:  
\$6.00 \$6.50 \$7.00 \$7.50 \$8.00 \$8.50

**5. Governor Richardson has declared 2006 the "Year of the Child." To improve the lot of children in New Mexico we should:**  
(Please rank; 1 is the highest)

- \_\_\_ Expand pre-kindergarten programs
- \_\_\_ Provide health care insurance for all children under 5
- \_\_\_ Provide a home visiting program for first time moms
- \_\_\_ Fund school breakfasts for elementary school students

- \_\_\_ Get junk food out of the schools
- \_\_\_ Provide physical education classes in elementary schools
- \_\_\_ Expand the childcare subsidy so more working women qualify for day care services
- \_\_\_ Provide support for grandparents raising grandchildren
- \_\_\_ Support public education with adequate funding
- \_\_\_ Fund more school-based clinics
- \_\_\_ Fund teen pregnancy prevention programs
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6. This year, the "Insure New Mexico" Task Force continued to work on increasing the number of New Mexicans with health care insurance (NM has the next to the highest % of people without insurance). Do you favor:**

- Expanding Medicaid to cover more people, especially children  Yes  No
- Giving tax credits to encourage small businesses, which do not currently offer insurance  Yes  No
- Giving tax credits to employers to help them keep the health care insurance they already offer  Yes  No
- Starting a Medicare-style universal health insurance program for all New Mexicans  Yes  No
- Stop dropping Medicaid recipients off the rolls  Yes  No
- Increase funds to primary care centers and UNMH to help pay for indigent care  Yes  No

**7. To ensure public safety in Albuquerque we need:**

- Even stricter probation, penalties and monitoring of sex offenders  Yes  No
- Graduated penalties for repeat domestic violence abusers  Yes  No
- Anti-meth measures including increased penalties and creation of a registry of meth-affected properties to protect future homebuyers  Yes  No
- Enhanced sentences for gang-related crimes  Yes  No
- More DWI checkpoints  Yes  No
- After-school activities for kids  Yes  No
- Substance abuse treatment programs  Yes  No
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8. What is your priority for capital projects in District 13?**  
(Please rank; 1 is highest)

- \_\_\_ A new high school for the West Side
- \_\_\_ A train from Albuquerque to Santa Fe
- \_\_\_ Improvements to other local schools
- \_\_\_ Bosque projects
- \_\_\_ Solution to the 4th and Montano bottleneck
- \_\_\_ Trails and Ditch improvements
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Use the space below for any other comments for Dede

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Here's my e-mail address. Please keep me informed:

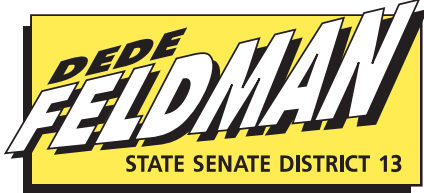
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Printing, postage & handling of this mailing was paid for by Dede Feldman, and not done at government expense. Any contributions for this purpose gleefully accepted!

Clip, fold with return address outside, tape, affix 37-cent stamp and mail. Thank you!



# District 13 Constituent Survey 2006 Session



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## Questionnaire Inside

*Happy New Year!*

## LEGISLATIVE FORUM

**Tuesday Jan. 10, 2006 • 7 pm**

North Valley Senior Center

3825 4th St. NW

*District 13 Residents...*

Join Dede & local legislators for answers to your questions about the 2006 session.



### Contact Dede at the Legislature:

**To Call:** 1-505-986-4300

### To Write:

Senator Dede Feldman  
NM State Capitol  
Santa Fe, NM 87503

**To E-Mail:** dede.feldman@nmlegis.gov

## Join Dede on the Web!

Keep up to date with current developments and post your comments on **DEDE'S NEW BLOG** at

<http://senatorfeldman.typepad.com/> or access it at [www.dedefeldman.com](http://www.dedefeldman.com).

The legislative website has bill drafts, schedules and other information at [www.legis.state.nm.us](http://www.legis.state.nm.us)

There are useful links to other sources of information on both sites.



Sen. Dede Feldman  
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Please return to:

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\* If mailed  
in January

PLACE  
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