

Legislature Begins

The state legislature convened today at noon. Both the House and Senate have new leadership after Democrats took control of the House and advanced their numbers in the Senate in November.

The session began with new Democratic majority leaders in the House of Representatives, where Republicans lost majority control in November elections, and new leaders in the Senate as well.

Rep. Brian Egolf, D-Santa Fe, has been elected by acclamation as the new Speaker of the House.

Sen. Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, is the new Senate Democratic floor leader. He replaces Michael Sanchez of Belen, who was defeated in the election by Republican Greg Baca. Senator Mary Kay Papen was reelected as the President *pro tempore* of the Senate.

Legislators appeared prepared to extend recent agency budget cuts into the coming year to address a deficit and plunging tax revenues linked to a downturn in the oil and natural gas industry.

Republican Gov. Susana Martinez and republican lawmakers are insisting the budget crunch can be resolved without raising taxes by streamlining government and reducing government pension contributions.

The governor has proposed sweeping school district cash balances to help restore reserves and protect the state's credit rating. Democratic lawmakers have given a cold reception to Martinez's proposal to reduce take-home pay among 80,000 state workers and teachers to avoid possible furloughs or salary cuts.

The governor and lawmakers are largely in agreement on extending recent agency spending cuts and preserving spending on public safety, child protective services and early education programs.

The text of the Governor's state of the state address is at [this link](#). While not mentioned in the address, one of her major efforts will be to force school employees and state employees to pay 3.5% more in retirement contributions and take cash balances away from school districts! While she says she doesn't want to hurt New Mexico families in the budget battle, she doesn't mind hurting tens of thousands of families of public employees!

Please contact all legislators with the message that school employees must not be burdened with these drastic cuts to take-home pay!

NEA-New Mexico's legislative training and reception will be next week on January 25. [Follow this link for details.](#)