



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **The Oil And Gas Industry Continues To Be A Dominant Force In New Mexico Politics**

Despite recent economic hardship, but with their revenues rebounding, the oil and gas industry's campaign contributions continue to be a dominant force in New Mexico politics.

This is according to a recent analysis by New Mexico Ethics Watch of general election reports filed with the Office of the Secretary of State. The reporting period runs from June 30 through September 7, 2020.

During the first campaign reporting period of the 2020 general election, the oil and gas industry has spent nearly \$900,000 on political activities in New Mexico.

As reported by New Mexico Ethics Watch and Common Cause New Mexico in our earlier 2020 oil and gas report, from 2017 through 2019 almost 500 individuals and entities associated with the oil and gas industry contributed to campaigns. (That report can be found at [http://nmethicswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Oil-and-Gas-Report\\_05012020.pdf](http://nmethicswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Oil-and-Gas-Report_05012020.pdf))

During this most recent reporting period, spanning slightly more than 2 months, already 183 individuals and entities associated with the oil and gas industry have made campaign contributions.

Among New Mexico Ethics Watch's findings are the following data points:

- \* Oil and gas businesses made more than \$564,000 in direct contributions to New Mexico candidates, committees, and Political Action Committees (PAC)s.
- \* Individuals involved in the oil and gas industry made more than \$211,000 in contributions.
- \* Oil and gas industry-related PACs made more than \$86,000 in contributions.
- \* Oil and gas lobbying organizations contributed at least \$31,000.

Complete information about contributions by individual oil lobbyists are not yet available. The state deadline for lobbyist reports is Oct. 7. The oil industry employs almost 100 lobbyists in New Mexico to influence the state's 112 legislators.

Among New Mexico Ethics Watch's other findings are:

- \* Chevron continues to be the major player in New Mexico campaign contributions. In the first general-election reporting period, the California based company and its associated PACs gave this state's politicians more than \$388,000. This is on top of the almost \$900,000 Chevron gave to candidates and PACs in this year's primary election.
- \* Besides Chevron, other top business contributors from the oil and gas industry include: Strata Production Company (\$36,000); The Jalapeño Corporation (\$24,000); major gasoline retailer Bowlin Travel Center (\$19,000) and Brewer Oil (\$15,000).

\*Almost 76 percent of the oil and gas industry's more than \$603,000 in contributions to candidates — \$456,000-plus — went to Republican candidates. With Chevron contributions, the partisan gap is almost as wide, with just over 68 percent of the company's more than \$258,000 in candidate contributions (\$175,650) going to GOP candidates.

\* The largest individual contributors from the oil and gas sector are John Yates, past president of Yates Petroleum in Artesia and his wife Charlotte Yates. Together the couple gave \$100,000 during the recent reporting period, plus a combined \$30,000 from trust funds bearing their names. The third largest individual oil and gas contributor is another member of the Yates family, Peyton Yates, who gave \$32,000. He's a founder and co-manager of Artesia's Santo Petroleum. (To put this in context, the per capita annual income of the average New Mexican, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, is just over \$26,000.)

\* Campaign finance reports show that in the recent filing period a majority of the general election contributions — slightly more than 53 percent — come from New Mexico sources, as opposed to out-of-state contributors. However, if history is any indication, that could change. In the previously-reference oil and gas report, published in March 2020, we noted that a majority of contributions from 2017 to 2019 came from out of state.

\* The top five candidates receiving the most oil and gas money in the first general election reports are: Isabella Solis, a Dona Ana County Republican trying to unseat Democrat Joanne Ferrary (\$27,000); Robert Godshall, an Albuquerque Republican running against appointed incumbent Marian Matthews (\$25,000); Crystal Diamond, a Republican from Elephant Butte running against Neomi Martinez-Parra, who defeated longtime Sen. John Arthur Smith in this year's Democratic primary (\$22,325); Giovanni Coppola, the GOP House candidate from Albuquerque trying to unseat freshman Rep. Karen Bash (\$20,500); and longtime GOP state Sen. Gay Kerman of Hobbs, who has no election opponent (\$17,100). Nearly all the cash Kerman brought in from all contributors in her latest report was passed on to fellow Republicans in contested legislative races.

“At a time when so many New Mexicans are struggling financially, it's amazing to see industries, such as oil and gas, still pumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into political campaigns,” said Kathleen Sabo, executive director of New Mexico Ethics Watch. “Though the pandemic has seriously slowed New Mexico's economy, it appears that COVID-19 hasn't slowed the flow of money from the oil industry into the coffers of our politicians.”

Finally, a major stumbling block that delayed publication of these findings was the fact that the Office of the Secretary of State launched a new campaign finance website in early September for the general election report, which, at least on first spin, was not very user-friendly. Hopefully the site will become less difficult to navigate as the election draws closer.

New Mexico Ethics Watch will continue to analyze general election campaign finance reports as they become available, crunching the numbers on oil and gas and other industry contributions.--

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**New Mexico Ethics Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and a principal leader in ethics reform in New Mexico. Our values are that ethics is for everyone; that good government leads to improved schools, healthier communities, and better business, and attention to ethics in public life leads to more equitable opportunities for all.**

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