



Stephanie Garcia Richard, State Land Commissioner
State of New Mexico

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SB 458 Aims to Increase Transparency on Transactions

Requires public notice on land exchanges and sales, proposals for large transmission lines and pipelines

SANTA FE, NM – Following up on her campaign promise to increase transparency at the State Land Office, Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard worked with Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto (D-15) to introduce SB 458, which will require public notice and input prior to the agency taking final action on any proposed land sales, land exchanges and rights-of-way (ROW) permits for large-scale electrical transmission lines and oil/gas pipelines involving state trust lands.

“I thank Senator Ivey-Soto for working with the land office on this legislation. In his tenure as a State Senator, he has been a champion of making our government more transparent. For too long land office business has been conducted in a manner that invites public scrutiny because there is so little known about its decisions, which often have far-reaching implications,” Commissioner Garcia Richard said. “This bill not only requires our office to give ample notice when we are contemplating large land deals, it also mandates that public meetings occur before final action is taken and affected citizens have a voice at the table.”

SB 458 states that a notice of a proposed land sale, land exchange or certain right-of-way permits will be published on the land office’s website and in a newspaper of general circulation in Santa Fe as well as in the community near the site of the proposed activity. Public meetings are to occur near the location of the proposed activity as well.

Public notices will provide ample details about the proposed action including: descriptions of the state trust land offered for sale or exchange or on which the ROW is to be located; summaries of potential effects the proposed transaction or ROW on surrounding lands; detailed information about the public meeting and contact information for a land office representative who can provide additional information regarding the proposal.

“I’ve promised to make our business dealings more transparent,” Commissioner Garcia Richard said. “We have a responsibility to manage the trust in such a way that it remains vibrant and robust so it will to continue to improve the lives of New Mexicans for generations to come. Having more New

Mexicans interested and engaged in the decisions that will shape the future of the trust is the best way to accomplish that goal.”

Commissioner Garcia Richard is advocating for multiple bills this session, including HB 398, sponsored by Representative Derrick Lente (D-65). The bill would raise the royalty rate to 25% for the most productive new oil and gas leases and ensure that companies pay royalty on wasted vented or flared gas.

Oil, gas, and mineral production, ranching and farming, and commercial development on State Trust Lands support public schools, seven universities, New Mexico Military Institute, New Mexico School for the Deaf, New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, three hospitals, correctional facilities, water conservation projects, and public building construction and repair. In fiscal year 2018, the State Land Office collected \$852 million from lease payments, oil and gas lease sale earnings, rights-of-way, permits, interest, fees, and oil, gas, and mineral royalties.