



## Senators Blast Governor Martinez Veto of 90% of Funds for Acequia Restoration

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Commentary: Senate Majority Whip, Senator Michael Padilla (D-14 – Bernalillo) today criticized the veto of critical funding for repairs and improvements to 25 acequias across the state by Governor Susana Martinez. Using her line-item veto authority, Martinez stripped almost \$1,000,000 in total from acequia projects that had been approved and passed by the Legislature during its recent 2016 meeting. The funds for the acequia projects were a portion of the Legislature’s annual capital outlay infrastructure spending package that was sent to the Governor.

“Governor Martinez’s veto of all these acequia projects was unwarranted and foolish, and it does real harm to our rural communities. These projects were relatively small in cost, but they deliver significant benefits for large numbers of families in rural New Mexico. The things we are most proud of in our state are under constant attack by this Governor,” said Sen. Michael Padilla.

The first acequias in New Mexico were constructed in the mid-sixteenth century, and are still in use today. Acequias are economically critical for many agricultural communities in New Mexico because they are key to irrigation and water storage for agriculture. The Interstate Stream Commission oversees the infrastructure needs of local acequias, which are dependent on the state for maintenance funds.

“The acequia associations are a huge part of our proud tradition and history; a huge part of who we are. They also ensure that our local agricultural waterways are managed appropriately, which are so important to small and rural economies. The acequia community irrigation system has been the foundation for families, villages, agricultural jobs for countless generations. Supporting our acequias is the lifeblood for communities, families and villages across New Mexico,” Sen. Padilla added.

In her veto message, Martinez derided the acequia projects as “local pork” that “often don’t create jobs or develop the economy.” The 25 projects she line-item vetoed accounted for 90% of the funds set aside for acequia repair by the legislature.