



NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION VICE-CHAIR VALERIE ESPINOZA (DISTRICT 3)

PRESS CONTACT » ARTHUR BISHOP » 505-827-4446 » ARTHUR.BISHOP@STATE.NM.US

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2014

PRC's Espinoza Rounds Out Successful First Year in Office

SANTA FE, N.M. — With year one of her inaugural term at the Public Regulation Commission complete, Commissioner Valerie Espinoza's feet are officially soaked.

"I'd like to say I've simply gotten my feet wet this first year, but that wouldn't do the experience justice," Espinoza said. "At this point I can confidently say they're under the waterline."

Elected in 2013 to fill the PRC's District 3 seat, Espinoza dove into her new role, elected as the commission's vice-chair while tackling some of the biggest issues in northern New Mexico. Among them, rural telecommunications service, renewable energy and utility easements in forested areas.

In June of last year, Espinoza gathered local, state and federal leaders in Santa Fe to form a task force that has since been looking at ways to mitigate forest fire through tree trimming and problem tree removal near utility power lines in the state's dense, drought-stricken forests.

"As dry conditions worsen it will become increasingly important to push the conversation forward about what can be done to prevent fires and better protect the state's vulnerable public and private lands," she said. "This is something we'll continue to look at and discuss very closely."

As a commissioner, Espinoza interacts with most of the 160 or so employees at the PRC. Getting to know each of them has been very important to her.

"The complicated work this agency churns out day to day is amazing," she said, adding that the PRC has some of the brightest and best attorneys, economists and analysts in the country. "It's great to have such a wealth of knowledge at your disposal when dealing with the incredibly complex, litigious cases the PRC handles."

At the end of the day, Espinoza said she's probably most passionate about protecting consumers and ensuring regulated services are robust and reasonably priced, especially in rural areas. Working directly with the PRC's Consumer Relations Division, she's constantly helping constituents resolve complaints and learn about various energy savings programs.

Already three months into her second year, Espinoza is as busy as ever, gearing up for several important rate hearings and large-scale projects, including the sale of the New Mexico Gas Company and retrofitting initiatives at the San Juan Generating Station. Along the way she has also managed to pick up an award for public service from the local business community. On March 6, she was recognized as one of *Albuquerque Business First's* "Women of Influence" honorees in New Mexico for 2014.

"Much has been accomplished over the past year, and I plan to build upon these achievements as we continue to make the PRC a stronger, more efficient agency," she said.

###