



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Lujan Grisham signs bipartisan measure providing more funding for N.M. firefighters**

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Wednesday signed into law a measure that will help fire departments across New Mexico purchase essential equipment, including water tanks, firetrucks and personal protective equipment.

“Local firefighters provide incredible services to our communities, and we have a responsibility to ensure they have all the tools they need to do their jobs safely and effectively,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham.

Sponsored by Sen. William Burt and Rep. Gail Armstrong, the bill passed both the House and the Senate with unanimous votes. Throughout the legislative session, the bill was supported by a broad, bipartisan coalition of legislators and community leaders.

“This legislation codifies our commitment to supporting first responders in our state,” said Sen. William Burt. “Simply put – funding for fire and rescue saves lives. This bill ensures our hard working fire and rescue crews have continued access to grant funds for the life saving tools they need to do their jobs. I’m grateful that Governor Lujan Grisham recognizes the importance of keeping this fund protected and has signed this legislation into law.”

Senate Bill 256 enables fire departments to access 100 percent of the available capital in the Fire Protection Fund. Before this bill, state law required that most capital in the Fire Protection Fund revert back to the General Fund, which left dozens of New Mexico fire departments without the funding they need. In Fiscal Year 2021 alone, firefighters lost out on \$13 million in possible funding.

“Now, that money can go where it is most-needed and where it can do the most good,” said Homeland Security and Emergency Management Secretary Bianca Ortiz-Wertheim. “My thanks go out to all the legislators who worked so hard on this bill, the fire chiefs and fire marshals who showed up to advance this cause, and the Governor for her leadership throughout this process.”

With better-funded fire departments, many New Mexicans may also benefit from lower home insurance premiums. In 2020, for example, the Ranchvale Fire Department in Curry County bought a dedicated water system with capital from the Fire Protection Fund. In turn, this purchase helped to significantly improve the area's ISO rating – a key metric that insurers use to set prices.

“The passage of Senate Bill 256 will greatly assist the New Mexico fire service, especially our rural volunteer fire departments who will benefit most from the additional funding,” said Interim State Fire Marshal John Kondratick. “This will better protect our communities and reduce insurance rates for consumers. It is definitely a win-win for everyone.”

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