

Meeting Minutes: Adelante Progressive Caucus

Date: February 25, 2026

Host: Colton Dean, Chair of the Adelante Progressive Caucus

Special Guests:

- Deb Haaland, Gubernatorial Candidate and former Secretary of the Interior
 - Patricia Roybal Caballero, New Mexico State Representative
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Key Discussion Topics

Federal Funding & State Resilience

- Deb Haaland praised the state legislature for filling budget gaps caused by federal cuts to Medicaid and other programs.
- She emphasized the need for the State Attorney General to continue suing the federal administration when it reneges on its obligations to New Mexico.
- Haaland stressed the importance of driving voter turnout to elect Democrats up and down the ballot to secure the state's needs.

Housing Shortage

- Addressing a question from Vice Chair Scotti Romberg, Haaland highlighted that the housing shortage is a statewide issue, noting a story from Roy, NM, where teachers are forced to live in travel trailers.
- She proposed offering state housing inspectors to municipalities to help speed up permitting processes when local inspectors are unavailable.

Education Vision

- In response to Carol Trujillo-Fay, Haaland outlined her education plan, which focuses on supporting students, educators, and families.
- She emphasized ensuring students' basic needs are met so they arrive at school ready to learn.
- Haaland advocated for providing career advancement and education opportunities for all school staff, including maintenance workers.
- Key educational goals include ensuring children can read before 3rd grade and expanding the "community school" model to provide wraparound services for low-income communities.

Wages and Affordability

- Representative Roybal Caballero proposed treating state employee salaries as a baseline overhead with built-in, recurring cost-of-living increases rather than making workers wait for minor percentage bumps.

- Haaland supported putting more money in New Mexicans' pockets through a higher minimum wage, an expanded Child Tax Credit, and an expanded Working Families Tax Credit.
- Roybal Caballero suggested shifting the terminology from "minimum wage" to "living wage".
- Roybal Caballero stated she plans to propose incremental wage increases, aiming for \$17 to \$20 per hour.

Water & Data Centers

- Haaland criticized data centers for wasting millions of gallons of water and emphasized that any new industry in NM must be sustainable.
- She stressed the importance of including all stakeholders, especially Native American tribes, in statewide water negotiations.
- Roybal Caballero strongly opposed data centers "invading" the state and treating it like a colony.
- Roybal Caballero criticized the push for using "produced water" as a false solution.
- She recounted a story from an El Paso desalination plant tour where she refused to drink the purportedly clean produced water because it had a visible film floating on it.

Public Ownership of Utilities

- Roybal Caballero warned against private equity firms like Blackstone taking over public utilities like PNM.
- She advocated for public and tribal ownership of renewable energy.
- She highlighted Picuris Pueblo's advanced solar initiatives and Jemez Pueblo's plans for geothermal energy as models for local economic development.

Legislative Engagement Strategy

- Chair Colton Dean asked for advice on tracking interim legislative committees.
- Roybal Caballero advised the caucus to narrow their focus by identifying 3 to 5 key priorities.
- She suggested matching these priorities to specific committees via the Legislative Council website to track meeting dates and agendas.
- She encouraged the caucus to draft specific questions and send them to her so she can ask them directly on the caucus's behalf during committee meetings.