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WED: Albuquerque mayoral race changes shape, + More

KUNM | By [KUNM News](#)

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Albuquerque city hall

Daniel Chavez enters ABQ mayoral race - *By Rodd Cayton, [City Desk ABQ](#)*

The field of candidates hoping to be the next mayor of Albuquerque continues to swell.

The latest entrant, according to reports, is Daniel Chavez, the president of a parking lot company in Albuquerque. City records show that as of Wednesday afternoon Chavez has not yet filed the paperwork to run.

Chavez, the president of Parking Company of America, is the fifth declared candidate, joining incumbent Mayor Tim Keller, retired Albuquerque Fire Chief Eddie Varela, former Bernalillo County Sheriff Darren White, 2024 New Mexico House of Representatives candidate Patrick Sais and former deputy manager for Sandoval County Mayling Armijo.

City Councilor Louie Sanchez hasn't declared his candidacy, but told *CityDesk ABQ* he's [considering a run for mayor](#).

The deadline for candidates to file is June 21. Early voting for the Nov. 4 election begins Oct. 18.

If necessary, a runoff election will take place Dec. 7, which would take place if no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the general election. A runoff is possible, as a higher number of candidates lessens the likelihood of a candidate receiving a majority of votes in the first round.

Keller in July [vetoed a proposal](#) to eliminate the majority requirement. The City Council decided not to attempt to override the veto.

The large number of candidates has already caused one potential candidate to forgo the race. Conservative radio personality Eddy Aragon, who challenged Keller in 2021, said Wednesday he's not running again.

Aragon said a growing field improves Keller's chance of election to a third term. He also expressed concern about the city's ability to provide more than \$750,000 to each candidate who opts for public financing. So far, Keller, Varela, Sais and White have announced they'll take public financing.

Chavez did not respond to phone calls seeking comment.

Albuquerque voters will also choose five city councilors.

Code Talkers disappear from U.S. military websites – *Axios, KUNM News*

Articles about Native American Code Talkers, whose work during World War II aided troops in defeating Axis Powers, have disappeared from some military websites.

[Axios identified](#) at least 10 articles mentioning the Code Talkers were deleted from U.S. Army and Department of Defense websites as of Monday.

Numerous military units used Indigenous languages in both world wars to transmit information in key battles.

[The Washington Post](#) reports the deletions included a page that celebrated Pfc Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian who was one of six Marines photographed raising the U.S. flag on Iwo Jima in 1945.

A DoD spokesman said these deletions were done to comply with President Trump's executive order to eliminate all diversity measures.

Zonnie Gorman is a historian and her father was an original Navajo Code Talker. She told Native America Calling that as a World War II historian, she finds this unsettling.

"It very much mimics what was happening in World War II and in Germany," she said.

Gorman told CNN there have been many attempts to erase Native American history.

"This is one more example of that, however we will stand strong and we will continue to be here," she said.

Bill targeting sales of parts to convert firearms into automatic weapons clears Senate - *By Hannah Grover, [New Mexico Political Report](#)*

Sen. Joseph Cervantes, D-Las Cruces, said it is not difficult for people to go online and find parts intended to convert firearms into automatic weapons, which are illegal in the United States. While on the Senate floor, he listed a few of the websites that offer these products.

Now he is pushing legislation that could create penalties for such sales.

Senate Bill 18 would allow New Mexico to regulate firearms and destructive devices under the Unfair Practices Act. Under SB 318, these websites could face civil penalties, such as fines.

SB 318 passed the Senate on a 21-18 vote Tuesday and now must move through the House of Representatives with only days left in the session.

"The goal of this bill is straightforward: making sure that those who manufacture, distribute, market, and sell weapon conversion devices are held

liable for the consequences of doing so,” Cervantes said in a statement. “Near to my district, we all remember the Walmart El Paso mass shooting, a man driving hundreds of miles specifically to El Paso to kill Mexicans and relying on one of these so-called ‘Glock switches.’ You shouldn’t be able to take a Glock and convert a handgun to shoot 40 rounds a second. And it’s not just mass carnage these weapons can inflict; I think back to our law enforcement – there’s no reason why our law enforcement should be out in the streets out-gunned by their adversaries.”

Republicans including Sen. Ant Thornton, R-Sandia Park, and Senate Minority Floor Leader William Sharer, R-Farmington, argued that SB 318 is too broad and could impact e-commerce outside of the firearms sector.

“We’re talking about a gun bill that doesn’t have anything to do with guns, really, it has to do everything to do with suing anybody for any reason, if we can find the smallest reason that it might have possibly been unfair to somebody, somewhere,” Sharer said.

Sen. Jay Block, R-Rio Rancho, argued that SB 318 will enrich lawyers at the expense of New Mexicans.

“These lawyers...are not making our lives safer,” he said. “Common sense does that. This is nothing but a money grab bill and everybody knows it.”

Sen. Nicole Tobiassen, R-Albuquerque, argued that SB 318 will raise insurance premiums on small business owners that rely on online commerce.

“We’re not open for business in New Mexico, we’re closed. This bill is the nail in the coffin for every single one of us, and I’m absolutely outraged,” she said.

Cervantes addressed claims that the New Mexico Trial Lawyers Association brought SB 318 to him.

“They had nothing to do with writing it, they had nothing to do with the idea,” he said. “This is entirely my effort to try and address gun violence in New Mexico by recognizing that our law enforcement officers are on the streets against people that are armed with automatic weapons.”

Texas visitor with measles traveled through Los Lunas-area, raising concerns of spread - *Matthew Reisen, [Albuquerque Journal](#)*

A Texas visitor infected with measles recently made the rounds in the Los Lunas area — going to a funeral, dining out and staying at a motel — leading to concerns of possible spread.

The New Mexico Department of Health, in a news release, did not say if the exposure led to any additional cases, which stands at 38 infections in Lea and Eddy counties.

DOH spokesman Robert Nott said the infected Texan made several stops on their journey through Guadalupe and Valencia counties, starting March 8 at the TA Travel Center on Route 66 in Santa Rosa.

From there, the traveler checked into a Days Inn on Main Street in Los Lunas, he said. The Texan ate at Sopa's restaurant in Bosque Farms on March 9 from noon to 3:30 p.m.

On March 10, the infected visitor went to Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Peralta, where a woman's funeral was being held, between 8 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Nott said that if anyone is unvaccinated against measles, or unsure if they are vaccinated, and were at any of the locales during those times, they should check their vaccination status and monitor themselves for symptoms: cough, runny nose and red eyes, which escalates to fever and rash.

"Recent measles cases in Texas and New Mexico are a reminder to stay vigilant," Dr. Miranda Durham, NMDOH chief medical officer, said in the release. "When someone with measles travels, the virus can spread to unprotected communities — particularly during high-travel periods like spring break. Vaccination is our strongest defense: one dose of vaccine is 93% effective, and two doses are 97% effective."

Measles is airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines, and has been considered eliminated from the U.S. since 2000.

If you develop symptoms, isolate and contact your doctor to arrange measles testing or use the NMDOH Helpline at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).

"The measles outbreak in New Mexico, currently at 38 cases, remains confined to Lea and Eddy counties," Nott said. "Residents of these areas

should prepare for continued exposure to measles as long as the virus circulates within their communities.”

The highly contagious virus has exploded across the border, where nearly 300 cases have been recorded. Two unvaccinated people, one in Texas and one in New Mexico, died of measles-related causes.

Pair of PFAS bills clears final committee, heads to Senate floor - Danielle Prokop, [Source New Mexico](#)

A pair of bills to address current and future contamination from so-called “forever chemicals” advanced through a final committee hearing Tuesday and now heads to the Senate floor.

Both bills address per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances — better known as PFAS — a class of manmade chemicals with a myriad of uses in waterproofing, manufacturing and more. However, due to their ability to withstand breaking down in heat, sunlight, water or oil, the chemicals can accumulate in the bodies of people and animals.

While research on the [environmental and health threats PFAS pose](#) remains ongoing, studies have shown increased risks for certain cancers, decreased fertility, developmental effects in children, reduced vaccine response and interference with hormones and cholesterol levels.

[House Bill 140](#) amends the definition of hazardous waste to include firefighting foams that contain PFAS. Rep. Andrea Reeb (R-Clovis) narrowed the bill’s scope with an amendment during the debate on the House floor to only address PFAS, rather than other hazardous materials.

Rep. Christine Chandler (D-Los Alamos) told the Senate Conservation Committee Tuesday that giving the New Mexico Environment Department the authority to treat PFAS as hazardous material and mandate their cleanup will boost the agency’s position in legal fights over PFAS contamination in the water in and around military bases.

New Mexico is engaged in two separate court battles with the U.S. Department of Defense over its actions and cleanup of the PFAS contamination. New Mexico joined multi-state litigation in the North Carolina courts against the military’s use of PFAS-laden aqueous film forming foam for fire fighting exercises.

In a federal lawsuit, the U.S. military sued the New Mexico Environment Department, saying the agency went too far in mandating cleanup around bases, and contended the state lacks regulatory authority over PFAS.

This law is a direct response to those arguments, Chandler said.

“As a result, they have been reluctant to come to the table to resolve that issue, so we are developing that authority for [NMED] so they may have that rare leverage in attempting to resolve that on behalf of citizens in that area as well as the state,” Chandler told the committee.

The second bill, [House Bill 212](#), would start a yearslong process phasing out of products with added PFAS and prohibit the sale of products containing PFAS, while allowing exemptions for electronics, cars and medical devices.

Sponsor Rep. Joanne Ferrary (D-Las Cruces) held up a bottle of fabric protector during the committee hearing, illustrating PFAS presence in everyday products.

“While this bottle costs about \$10, it can cost \$18 million to remove and destroy a pound of PFA from drinking water and wastewater treatment plants,” She said. “HB12 starts us down the path of sunseting these harmful products.”

If approved, New Mexico would be the second state to enact a PFAS ban on consumer products, following [Maine’s lead](#).

New Mexico Environment Secretary James Kenney told Source NM he was speaking with Senate leadership to try and secure a floor vote as the session enters into its final four days.

“Having these discussions has precipitated a lot of good effort, but passing the bill will now hold everyone accountable to staying at the table,” Kenney said. “And that has been missing from New Mexico on this topic.”

Dust storms and strong winds rage across New Mexico as transit authorities close major highways - *Associated Press*

Dust storms, strong gusts and at least two brush fires descended on New Mexico on Tuesday, snarling highway traffic, knocking out power and setting buildings ablaze.

The National Weather Service pushed an emergency alert to cellphones that warned of zero-visibility conditions and adverse health consequences for infants and the elderly. And in some parts of the state, gusts have reached as high as 70 mph (113 kph).

The state is being hit by strong winds off an area of low pressure directly over Kansas on Tuesday evening, while extremely dry conditions over the last few months have created prime conditions for fire threat and dust storms, said Marc Chenard, meteorologist for the weather service.

Dry, dusty weather reduced visibility to almost zero in some instances amid gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) along the Albuquerque-Santa Fe corridor and high plains communities in Torrance County, including towns along Interstate 40. Interstate 25 was opened after a brief closure near Cochiti Pueblo due to dust, wind and poor visibility.

Blinding dust prompted New Mexico's transportation department to close a 130-mile stretch of Interstate 10, from the Arizona state line to the outskirts of Las Cruces, along with state highways near Deming.

High winds also led to road closures in the state's oil-producing region near Roswell and Carlsbad.

"Motorists should not drive into a dust storm. Pull aside and stay alive," the National Weather Service said in a dust-storm warning.

More than 39,000 customers were without power by Tuesday evening, according to PowerOutage.us. The utility PNM said on X that it was responding to several outages due to high winds and suggested its customers prepare for the possibility of more outages.

Authorities also warned of extreme conditions in the event of wildfire, in the aftermath of a grasslands fire that prompted evacuations Friday on the outskirts of Wagon Mound.

A brush fire ignited in Bosque Farms, a village just south of Albuquerque, temporarily closing part of Highway 47, according to Albuquerque TV station KOAT. The Valencia County Fire Department said in a social media post that the fire has "burned structures," though the number of buildings that sustained damage was not immediately clear.

Beyond New Mexico, dust storms last week resulted in a pileup in western Kansas on Interstate 70 involving dozens of cars and trucks that left eight people dead.

Teens are charged with murder in the hit-and-run of a bicyclist posted on social media - *By Morgan Lee, Associated Press*

Police have charged a 13-year-old with murder, taken an 11-year-old into custody and are continuing to search for a 15-year-old in the apparently deliberate hit-and-run of a bicyclist in Albuquerque that was recorded on video inside a stolen car last year.

The detained 13-year-old boy is believed to be the driver of the car involved in the May 2024 hit-and-run that killed 63-year-old physicist Scott Dwight Habermehl while he was biking to his job at Sandia National Laboratories. The other boys are believed to have been passengers.

Video of the crash was recorded from inside the car and circulated on social media. It was reported to authorities by people including a middle school principal after a student flagged it.

A portion of the video, ending just before impact, was released by police Tuesday. It shows the car accelerating as the flashing tail light of a bicycle becomes visible. A voice believed to be the 15-year-old's says, "Just bump him, brah."

According to police, the driver asks, "Like bump him?"

A passenger says, "Yeah, just bump him. Go like ... 15 ... 20."

The car veers into a marked, dedicated bike lane. Loud sounds can then be heard in the full recording, including "metal flexing," according to law enforcement.

The 13-year-old and 15-year-old have been charged with an open count of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, leaving the scene of an accident involving great bodily harm or death and unlawful possession of a handgun by a person, police said in a statement.

The 11-year-old will be put in the custody of the state's Children, Youth & Families Department and evaluated. A little over a week after the fatal crash,

police had arrested him on an unrelated felony warrant, according to law enforcement.

Detectives are working with prosecutors and state social workers to determine what charges can be brought against an 11-year-old and whether he might be detained. For youths 13 or under, juvenile courts adjudicate charges with a maximum sentence to juvenile detention ending at age 21. Children ages 11 and younger can't be held at a juvenile detention center.

The Associated Press doesn't typically name people under 18 accused of a crime. Michael Rosenfield, a publicly appointed attorney for the 13-year-old defendant, declined to comment on the case ahead of an initial meeting with the boy.

Under New Mexico law, teenagers ages 15 to 18 — and 14 in some instances after evaluation — can be tried in adult court only for first-degree murder after a grand jury indictment. Authorities can pursue adult sentencing in juvenile court for several serious crimes, said Dennica Torres, district defender for Law Offices of the Public Defender.

A similar case involving teenage boys who allegedly recorded themselves deliberately hitting a bicyclist who ended up dying happened in Las Vegas in 2023.

State legislators in New Mexico have advanced a bill with House approval that would slightly expand the share of juvenile cases that carry the potential for adult sentencing. Time is running short for the state Senate to vet the bill and vote on it before the Legislature adjourns Saturday at noon.

Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said in a statement that she was horrified by video of the collision — and "appalled" by inaction by legislators on juvenile justice reform proposals.

U.S. Sens. Luján, Heinrich and others push back at USDA funding cuts - *By [Source New Mexico](#)*

New Mexico Democratic U.S. Sens. Ben Ray Luján and Martin Heinrich, along with 30 of their colleagues on Tuesday wrote to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins in response to the department's cancellation of \$1 billion in funding for programs connecting farmers with food banks and schools.

As Source NM reported on Monday, New Mexico had been slated to receive \$2.8 million through the The Regional Farm to Food Bank program for the next three-year cycle. The state learned earlier this month the program, which officials said has spent more than \$3.6 million with local producers since it began in 2021, will end at the end of this funding cycle in June.

In the letter, Luján, who serves on the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, and others request the department reverse the decision to end the the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, which funded the RF2FB, as well as the [Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program](#), which funds states to purchase local food products for schools and child care institutions. Regarding the latter, The Food Depot Executive Director Jill Dixon told Source New Mexico did not have that program set up yet, so the cancelation is "a loss of opportunity rather than the loss of an existing program." Nonetheless, she noted, "both are very significant."

In their letter, the senators request Rollins provide information about the status of reimbursements through both programs, as well as any assessment of the impacts the cancellations will have. They also urge her to reverse the decision, writing: "We have grave concerns that the cancellation...poses extreme harm to producers and communities in every state across the country. At a time of uncertainty in farm country, farmers need every opportunity to be able to expand market access for their products."

Read the full letter [here](#).

Luján on Monday held a roundtable at the Roadrunner Food Bank. He talked about the funding cancellations to Source in advance of that event, noting that "the Regional Farm to Food Bank program was an essential program that was agreed to in a bipartisan way over the last few years, understanding the need across America when it came to access to food and the problem with hunger. When these programs are severed or eliminated, it just makes it harder for everyone."

In a news release following the round table, Luján said: "The Musk-Trump funding freeze and broad and indiscriminate firings across the federal government have devastated communities across America, leaving countless families uncertain where their next meal would come from. Food banks across New Mexico ensure families in need have access to nutritious meals. But now, Elon Musk, President Trump, and Congressional Republicans are

threatening critical funding for nutrition support – putting New Mexico families at risk.”

Albuquerque City Council passes law targeting city’s ‘bad actor’ landlords - *By Damon Scott, [City Desk ABQ](#)*

There’s new hope for scores of renters in Albuquerque who face issues such as a lack of running water, a lack of hot water, substandard heating and cooling, front doors that don’t lock, appliances that don’t work, pest infestation and unsafe stairwells.

The Albuquerque City Council unanimously passed legislation Monday night that directs the city’s Planning Department to hire a full-time code enforcement officer dedicated exclusively to prioritize such complaints. City Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn authored the legislation and said that while most landlords respond to tenant concerns sufficiently, there were enough “bad actors” to warrant a new position and enhanced enforcement.

“This is my attempt to make sure that the city is providing assistance to renters who are trying to find their way through the process to get whatever problem they’re experiencing fixed,” she said.

Fiebelkorn said many renters with urgent issues don’t have the time or resources to take their complaints through the court process.

“Right now they’re on their own in a lot of cases,” she said. “They want to take it through the court system, but they have no idea how to do so and quite frankly don’t have the money to start that.”

Councilor Dan Champine, himself a landlord, agreed that it was the city’s few, but significant, “bad apples” that sully the name of responsible property owners.

“This hits really close to home for me,” he said. “We need to get this done, because that small percentage that’s tarnishing the name of good owners who provide a wonderful home for people to live in is something that needs to be fixed.”

The legislation, which passed on a 9-0 vote, has the support of the city’s Planning Department, which hires and oversees the work of code enforcement officers. The city said it received about 5,000 calls through its 311 system related to housing issues in the past three months . The city’s

current budget allows for 50 code enforcement officers; there are currently three vacancies.

“Let’s start with one person who is dedicated to answering calls from tenants with life-safety issues in their homes who can really help them through the process,” Fiebelkorn said. “They can get out there as soon as possible to issue the original citation; they can explain the rights to the tenants — that person is going to be the one that’s helping them.”

The measure is the latest renter protection effort to be driven by Fiebelkorn. Late last year, councilors approved her bill that [ensures tenants have cooling systems](#) installed in apartments and living units. Fiebelkorn is also [a proponent of repealing](#) the state’s prohibition on rent control. A bill to repeal the prohibition is currently stalled in the New Mexico Legislature with just a few days left before the end of the legislative session.

<https://www.kunm.org/kunm-news-update/2025-03-19/wed-texas-visitor-with-measles-traveled-through-los-lunas-area>