

# Q&A: Senate District 35 John Arthur Smith

- **NAME:** John Arthur Smith
- **POLITICAL PARTY:** Democrat
- **OCCUPATION:** Real Estate Appraiser
- **CITY OF RESIDENCE:** Deming, New Mexico
- **RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:** Incumbent 32 years
- **EDUCATION:** Graduated from UNM in 1966
- **CAMPAIGN WEBSITE:** [johnarthursmith.com](http://johnarthursmith.com)

## **What steps should the Legislature take to ensure New Mexico has a balanced budget amid falling oil prices and an economic downturn prompted by the coronavirus outbreak?**

The fiscal year 21 will be patched together using reserves and federal spending money if additional latitude is granted by the Feds, both are non-recurring sources of money. If this is the approach a large reserve will be required to carry forward for fiscal year 22. A large reserve for 22 will possibly mitigate deep cuts for 22. (I anticipate a recession environment that would discourage tax increase.)

## **What more, if anything, should the Legislature do to address a court ruling that found New Mexico is failing to provide a sufficient education to all students?**

The lawsuit is now in the hands of a third district judge and the administration has requested that the case should terminate since in the eyes of the administration the requirements have been met. The Impact Aid issue by the Feds may have some influence. I don't know how the \$300 million in cash balances by the schools will enter into the conversation given the revenue declines.

## **What changes, if any, should New Mexico make to its gross receipts tax code?**

The state needs to lower the rates and expand the base. The state needs to increase local government share of GRT.

## **Do you support or oppose legalizing recreational marijuana use in New Mexico and taxing its sales?**

I do not support legalizing the use until the federal government steps to the plate. I have over 600 Border Patrol stationed in my district and they will enforce the federal law.

**In recent years, New Mexico has steadily increased spending on early childhood programs, such as home visiting, prekindergarten and child care assistance, and created a new early childhood trust fund. Do you support or oppose a constitutional amendment that would withdraw more money from the Land Grant Permanent Fund to increase funding for early childhood services?**

I do not support the erosion of the land grant fund. This would require a vote of the people and approval from congress to expand the beneficiaries.

**Do you support or oppose opening the state's primary elections to voters who aren't affiliated with either major political party?**

I support an open primary.

**Do you support or oppose repealing a long-dormant 1969 state law that outlaws abortion, except in limited circumstances?**

I oppose repealing the law.

**Would you support a merit-based evaluation system to determine how the state spends its capital outlay funding? Should each legislator be required to disclose which projects he or she funded?**

The capital outlay process needs reform and not just at the legislative level but also at the executive level and also at the local government level.

**Do you support or oppose requiring lobbyists to disclose which bills they advocate for or against?**

Normally one knows who the lobbyist represents and what legislation they have an interest in. I don't see a large problem with the present system.

**New Mexico is highly reliant on the oil and natural gas industries to generate revenue to fund state programs, as evidenced by recent oil boom and bust cycles. What are the things you would do to diversify the state's economy and revenue base?**

Trust funds and permanent fund earnings stabilize the oil and gas revenue benefits. The economic emphasis should be placed on existing New Mexico business since they are present and the state needs to back off on some of the effort to hit the long ball such as Tesla.

**Do you support or oppose updating the current prohibition in the law on assisted suicide in order to allow aid-in-dying under certain medical circumstances?**

Society seems to have an increase in effort to discount life and I oppose weakening the law.

**Would you support or oppose a moratorium on fracking? And should the state impose additional renewable energy mandates as a way to address climate change concerns?**

I oppose a moratorium on fracking. It appears that the market is addressing this issue at this point in time.

**What steps should the Legislature take to address crime and improve public safety?**

This question would take up an entire Sunday paper but more experienced judges certainly would not hurt the system. Public safety would be enhanced if the state did not have such a volatile revenue stream.

**Do you support or oppose the practice of legislative budget-writing committees holding closed-door meetings during the crafting of state spending bills?**

New Mexico has 2 budgets, one by the governor and one by the Legislature. The legislative budget for the most part is built during the interim committee process over an 8 month period in open meetings the public and special interest can observe. Closed meetings can be handled by subcommittees short of a quorum.

**Personal Background:**

**Have you or your business, if you are a business owner, ever been the subject of any state or federal tax liens?** No.

**Have you ever been involved in a personal or business bankruptcy proceeding?** No.

**Have you ever been arrested for, charged with, or convicted of drunken driving, any misdemeanor or any felony in New Mexico or any other state? If so, explain.** No