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Mary Martha Chicoski  
President

## Op-Ed from State Bar President Martha Chicoski on House Bill 2

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In the recently concluded 2015 legislative session, Republicans and Democrats united in approving a state budget that will ensure New Mexicans continue to receive essential services, including the timely and fair administration of justice that everyone is entitled to under our Constitution.

In approving the state budget, a measure known as House Bill 2, the Legislature carefully balanced available revenue with the growing needs of the public. For each dollar of the general fund that lawmakers propose to spend next year, 2.6 cents will support our justice system. Everyone —individuals and businesses— benefits from the efficient operation of our courts. Public safety improves and economic interests are protected when disputes are resolved in a timely manner. As members of the legal community, we value this wise investment in good government.

Equal access to justice and the right to a jury trial are bedrock principles of our democracy. In order to ensure fair trials, the Legislature's proposed budget allocates modest additional resources to pay interpreters who assist those with limited English proficiency, and jurors performing their civic duty. Fair trials also require adequate funding for district attorneys, who prosecute criminal cases, and public defenders, who represent those charged with crimes. This budget further allocates much needed resources for other aspects of our justice system, including funding for core operations of our magistrate courts, drug court programs, and attorneys called upon to represent abused and neglected children and their families. Adequately funding each of these essential components of our justice system benefits everyone.

The State Bar of New Mexico, an organization representing more than 9,200 attorneys invested in the well-being of all New Mexicans, supports the Legislature's bipartisan approval of a state budget that supports the efficient administration of justice. As members of the state's legal community, each of us understands that "justice delayed is justice denied." It's imperative to adequately fund the justice system in order to provide services crucial to everyone: old and young, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican.

We ask all New Mexicans to speak out and urge Gov. Susana Martinez to sign House Bill 2 into law without altering the budget the Legislature has responsibly adopted for the justice system. New Mexicans deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your consideration in printing this Op-Ed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Chicoski", written over a white background.

Martha Chicoski  
President, State Bar of New Mexico