

ABQ organizations help asylum seekers

Groups provide food, shelter for immigrants in transit



GREG SORBER/JOURNAL

An asylum seeker holds a palm cross as Father Charles McCarthy leads a Palm Sunday Mass in the lobby of an Albuquerque hotel where a group of immigrants are staying after being released from ICE custody.

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BY KATY BARNITZ
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Clad in his red vestments, Father Charles McCarthy kicked off the start of Holy Week on Sunday with a message to the two dozen or so asylum seekers inside the makeshift church set up in an Albuquerque hotel lobby. "Just like you," the priest told them in Spanish, "Jesus was

rejected when he walked on the Earth."

The migrants, some holding palms shaped into crosses, listened attentively as McCarthy continued his Palm Sunday Mass.

For these parents and children, the Mass marked a respite from the journey that has brought them to this moment, both in their own

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How to help

Monetary donations can be made to Albuquerque Interfaith and Catholic Charities, St. Francis Xavier, at 820 Broadway SE, is accepting children's clothing, men's shoes, backpacks, hygiene supplies, lightweight gloves, caps and hats, small toys, coloring books and crayons and fresh fruit.

Immigration controversy

White House dials down proposed relocations to 'sanctuary cities' A4

Finishing kick: Udall outlines goals for his last term



Sen. Tom Udall

NM political veteran's agenda faces long odds in divided Senate

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BY SCOTT TURNER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Tom Udall may not be running for reelection in 2020, but New Mexico's senior senator

insists his battles in the chamber are far from over.

With 20 months to go before retirement, he hasn't given up the hope of blocking President Donald Trump's national emergency. He still wants to bring an end to the war in Afghanistan, and wants to prevent war with Iran.

Udall in an interview with the Journal said he wants to protect the planet "from fur-

ther damage" from climate change, and will continue to focus on public lands and Native American initiatives.

"This isn't a retirement," said Udall. "I am looking for areas where I can make a difference."

Udall didn't expand on his decision to leave the Senate beyond the reasons he gave

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UNM secures funding for movement disorders clinic

Treatment center effort spurred by former regent Jamie Koch

BY RYAN BOETEL
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Former University of New Mexico regent Jamie Koch learned there was a months-long waiting list to see a movement disorder specialist when his doctor told Koch he probably had Parkinson's disease.

He has since become an advocate for creating a clinic at UNM that will bring together resources to help treat Parkinson's and other movement disorders. Partial funding for such a center was included in a state spending bill, and doctors at the university hospital are hopeful the complex will be up and running by late summer or early fall 2020.

"This movement center won't benefit me now. I know I have Parkinson's and I know what I have to do and my doctor has me on a good schedule," Koch said in an interview. "But people who don't know they have it ... or somebody who doesn't have much money and it would take nine months to determine if they have Parkinson's, what are they going to do? That's why I pushed so hard."

See **UNM** >> A2

Education deadline arrives for NM

Judge ordered action on schools over sufficient funding by today

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BY DAN MCKAY
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — New Mexico faces a court-ordered deadline today to develop a plan that ensures all students get the sufficient public education they're guaranteed under the state Constitution.

But it doesn't sound like anyone will be to court right away.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and state lawmakers this year agreed on a budget plan that will infuse an extra \$447 million into public schools, an increase of 16%. The state also approved a variety of other education measures to extend the school year, ramp up teacher pay and revise the accountability system for schools.

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STUDENTS TO THE RESCUE



Many N.M. Tech students volunteer on Socorro Search and Rescue.

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Education deadline arrives for New Mexico

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At least some of the plaintiffs who sued the state say the funding plan still fails to meet the constitutional requirement that a sufficient public education be available to all children in the state.

But they also intend to take more time to evaluate the state's plan and its impact on students.

Maria Archuleta of the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, which represents some of the plaintiffs, said the budget plan adopted by lawmakers doesn't take effect until July 1, the beginning of the new fiscal year.

The Center on Law and Poverty "won't file anything until we get a clearer view of the impact of the education legislation,"

she said in a written statement. "The money comes through in July but it will like take longer than that to really see what is going on."

The lawsuit, filed in 2014, resulted in a landmark court decision last year by state Judge Sarah Singleton — who found the state is violating the constitutional rights of "at-risk students" by failing to provide them with a sufficient education.

Her ruling focused on children from low-income families and children who have disabilities, are Native American or are English language learners.

In July, Singleton ruled that the state failed to provide sufficient funding to school districts and that the state Public Education Department had failed to ensure the money is well-spent

to meet the needs of at-risk students.

And she gave the state a mid-April deadline — today — to provide schools with the necessary resources.

But no immediate hearing is scheduled to determine the state's compliance.

Instead, under Singleton's most recent judgment in the case, anyone can file a report after today explaining whether the state is in compliance with her orders — and then she will address any issues raised by the filing.

Senate Majority Whip Mimi Stewart, an Albuquerque Democrat who jointly sponsored some of this year's education legislation, said she hopes the judge, when asked, will agree that the state made a "good-faith effort"

to address her ruling.

More work, in any case, will be necessary to improve New Mexico's schools, Stewart said.

"This was a good first step," she said in an interview Friday, "but it's certainly not the end of it."

The state and its school districts are entering a critical period. Districts are now crafting their budgets for the coming year, based on the state funding and other education legislation.

It's important, Stewart said, to see how the changes made at the state level will play out in the individual districts, where educators on the front lines will be working to improve student outcomes.

"It's not an overnight issue for these schools," she said. "You can't starve districts for 10

years and then think in one year, things will be different."

Lujan Grisham, a Democrat who took office Jan. 1, after the case was decided, said in March that her administration will "litigate aggressively" in the coming months to try to avoid long-term court oversight of the state's public schools.

At least one question is already before the court — centering on how much the state should pay the plaintiffs as a reimbursement for their costs.

Attorneys for each set of plaintiffs are seeking state reimbursement for the hiring of expert witnesses and to cover other expenses.

All told, the state could be liable for up to \$449,000 in costs, though state attorneys are fighting the figure.

ABQ groups help asylum seekers

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lives and in the history of the United States, which has been struggling to deal with an influx of migrants at the southern border.

Also struggling are the charitable organizations in El Paso and elsewhere along the border, and many of them are turning to nearby cities like Albuquerque to help fill the overwhelming need they're seeing. Albuquerque residents and businesses have stepped up, providing food, fresh clothes, warm beds for them to sleep in, and even spiritual counseling before they depart to cities across the country to join their sponsors. In total, Albuquerque organizations have worked with about 1,400 immigrants, volunteers said.

And as they do that work, many have been moved by what they've seen.

There was the volunteer who broke down crying after she spoke with an asylum seeker as he prayed.

"When he saw her he said, 'Oh I'm praying for all of you, and I'm praying for the United States,'" Carla Lanting Shibuya said. "Here this man has been through hell and he's thinking about us."

And the woman from Honduras who was headed to Miami to meet her sister.

"And I just thought, I have two sisters," Lanting Shibuya said. "We're really close. She hadn't seen her sister in I don't know how many years, and it just killed me."

And then there was the exterminator who was working at one of the hotels hosting a large group of immigrants who made a donation and offered to provide a meal.

"He said to me, 'For me this is personal,'" she said. "And one of the little kids ran by and he pointed and said, 'That was me.' And then he just started crying."

According to volunteer Eleanor Milroy, many of these asylum seekers have been traveling for weeks before they cross into the United States. They're then taken into ICE custody where they eat sandwiches and sleep under aluminum blankets, volunteers said. Days later they're released.

They arrive in Albuquerque on ICE buses that have bars on the windows and carry about 60 people each.

And that's where people like Milroy and Lanting Shibuya, of Albuquerque Interfaith, step in to greet them. Since March 11, they've worked with about 600 people. And Albuquerque Interfaith is just one of five groups around the city providing accommodations for groups of asylum seekers. Most stay for a few days at most before traveling by bus or by plane to their final destinations.

"And when they leave, they're showered, they've had a good night's sleep, they're in fresh clothes, I mean it's totally different from the minute they get off the bus," Milroy said. "I mean you wouldn't believe the transformation."

Milroy says that El Paso-area organizations reached capacity last month and con-



Volunteer Edith Dominguez, right, serves salad to asylum seekers at an Albuquerque hotel on Sunday afternoon.



A child holds a stuffed hummingbird in a room full of clothing and other items donated to asylum seekers who are briefly staying in Albuquerque before moving on to destinations around the country.



Carla Lanting Shibuya, a site coordinator with Albuquerque Interfaith, talks about her experiences helping to coordinate accommodations for large groups of asylum seekers.

tacted other cities for help. Each morning, an organizer there sends a text message that says how many people are being released from ICE custody in El Paso and how many will be sent to each site. ICE then buses those groups to their respective stay-over cities. On Sunday, that message says that 802 people are being released. In mid-March, Milroy said, daily numbers were generally in the high 200s. She worries the situation is unsustainable.

Volunteers charged with intake duties were stationed at the hotel Saturday afternoon when a group of 100 arrived. They let the immigrants know who they are and what they can offer.

"We are not ICE. We are

GREG SORIBER/JOURNAL

Udall outlines goals for last term in U.S. Senate

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when he made his announcement last month.

He said not having the distraction of a campaign would help him focus on the tasks remaining at the end of his term, again asserting that "the office belongs to the people" and not to him.

He faces an uphill battle in the Senate with many of the issues he's taking the lead on with Republicans in the majority and resistance from the Trump White House.

The House of the initiatives Udall introduced — the For the People Act — faced roadblocks in the Senate earlier this year.

Udall sponsored the Senate companion to the same measure that passed the House and addressed voter issues and campaign finance issues. The bill would allow voter same-day registration nationwide, restore ex-minutes' right to vote and set up a public financing system for congressional campaigns. It would require presidential candidates to disclose their tax returns and Election Day would become a holiday for federal workers.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pledged not to bring it up for a vote. The White House called the bill "micromanaging" the electoral system, with Trump promising a veto.

Udall said he wanted to stop the Trump administration from "assaulting our democracy."

Udall said the frustration of dealing with the Republican majority and the Trump White House did not factor into his decision not to run for a third term.

"It's always a battle in the Senate," Udall said. "And I want to continue to fight hard on the issues that have New Mexico in the bull's eye."

Bridging the divide

Udall said he would be "looking for Republicans to work with" and believes it is possible to build a consensus even on issues where there appears to be a partisan divide.

"I still hope we can get many things done," Udall said.

He mentioned passage of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act as an example of what can be accomplished. The act was enacted into law last month.

It had bipartisan support in both houses. The act designated more than 270,000 acres as wilderness areas in New Mexico. Udall, Senate colleague Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., and Rep. Deb Haaland, D-N.M., sponsored key provisions of the law.

It is for that reason he believes the effort to block Trump's national emergency on border security issues is not dead. Trump vetoed the previous legislation after it passed the Senate.

"Twelve Republicans crossed the aisle and voted for the legislation," Udall said. "I believe if we continue working, we can get enough votes for a

veto-override."

Udall and other members of the New Mexico congressional delegation are trying to stop the Trump administration from using funding appropriated for projects at military bases for construction of his proposed wall.

Optimism and realism

The senator said his biggest disappointment in serving in the Senate was seeing "many of the things I've worked on not get accomplished."

"But we're not giving up," he said.

He's still focused on the nation's renewable energy standards, but admits "it takes a long time to build a national consensus."

He is working on a national renewable energy portfolio with a target of having the nation using 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.

His office said he plans to unveil the legislation in May. It is similar to the Energy Transition Act enacted into law in New Mexico last month.

Udall said one of the aspects he's enjoyed most as senator is talking to his constituents, hearing their innovative ideas and seeing if the innovations can be used on a national level.

He said he is also focused on building a consensus to "end the scourge of war."

Udall — who opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq — has sponsored legislation with Kentucky Republican Rand Paul to bring an end to the war in Afghanistan.

It is one issue where he appears more in line with the Trump administration.

"We should have long ago ended the war in Afghanistan," he said, adding he's talked to parents of soldiers who have served there and had to answer questions about why their loved ones are not coming home.

He is further apart with the administration on Iran.

Udall fears the Trump administration is preparing for war against Iran. He said he is working on legislation to prevent it, saying only Congress has the authority to declare war.

The road ahead

He said he wanted to continue to champion the cause of Native Americans, and mentioned fighting for provisions helping Native Americans in the 2018 Farm Bill and the 2015 Violence Against Women Act.

"That's up for renewal again, and we're going to fight to keep those provisions in," Udall said. The renewal of the Violence Against Women Act passed the House and is now before the Senate.

The senator said his time in public service won't end when his term expires in January 2021. He said he will continue to work on issues he's championed in the Senate, but said he was not ready to announce what his future plans will be.



Sen. Tom Udall appeared at a leadership conference on the House floor at the State Capitol in 2017, answering questions from high school students from around the state.

EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL