NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION
FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONER VALERIE ESPINOZA

PRESS CONTACT » CARLOS PADILLA » 505-827-4446 » CARLOS.PADILLA2@STATE.NM.US

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 30, 2015

NEWS RELEASE

Commissioner Espinoza Expresses Concerns Regarding Recent PRC Decisions, Performance

SANTA FE – New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner Valerie Espinoza has found herself on the dissenting side of a number of votes recently, but proudly stands by her choices, stating that she will not waiver when it comes to matters of public safety and accountability for public officials.

Most recently, Commissioner Espinoza has expressed concerns with the recent decisions regarding Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft. "My biggest concerns are always the protection of consumers and to do what's in the very best interest of the public," says Espinoza, following the Wednesday, April 29 meeting. "I didn't want any part of this idiocy. I voted 'no' as it relates to revising the rules of the TNCs. They have been deemed a motor carrier, and that means they should be subjected to a drug test at the minimum. But to jump through hoops to accommodate these TNCs does not level the playing field, as was intended."

One area in which Commissioner Espinoza takes some comfort is that the New Mexico Attorney General shares her concerns on this issue. "I'm glad one other elected official other than myself is concerned about public safety as it relates to the PRC's need for drug testing and proper coverage. The AG's Office agrees that TNCs are subject to drug and alcohol testing. Anyone who doesn't see this as a must is making our streets unsafe and reducing safety standards. I vowed to protect not only the residents of New Mexico's pocketbooks, but to clean up the past history and reputation of the PRC."

Espinoza joined Commissioner Pat Lyons in a 3-2 vote on March 18, 2015, seeking to continue with an annual salary cap in place since 2011 of $99,000 for PRC employees, citing the need to raise mid- and lower-level employees before worrying about further raising the salaries of the upper echelon of staff at the state agency. The majority of the Commission, however, rescinded the salary cap.

Commissioner Espinoza also took issue with the agency's handling of a fatal train wreck that took place early Tuesday morning, April 28, and the decisions behind the handling of the agency's response. "I took it upon myself at the request of John Strooarczk of the Federal Railroad Administration to dispatch a qualified transportation investigator to the scene to assist the NTSB investigators responding to the scene of the crash, but who had not yet arrived from out of state," Espinoza says. "And I'd do it again," she says, "I will not hesitate when it comes to public safety and providing the functions as spelled out in 8-8-11.b (railroad safety enforcement)." She herself drove to Dexter to offer her support during the tragic occurrence and in the PRC's role as the enforcement agency. "I was proud to see Chris Martinez, a certified and trained Federal Railroad Administration investigator, in action and how he was able to assist to that degree," Espinoza states. "My condolences to the family."

In conclusion, Commissioner Espinoza says, "I have been actively working with other elected officials and utility companies to improve infrastructure in northern New Mexico, and especially the quality of service each of the utilities as required to provide, including telecom. Staying focused on all areas of and representing all of New Mexico is my highest priority."

###