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Udall: President's Budget 'Devastating for New Mexicans...and I Predict it is Dead on Arrival'

WASHINGTON - Today, U.S. Senator Tom Udall, lead Democrat on the Senate Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, released the following statement on President Trump's budget blueprint:

"The president's unconscionable budget proposal would be devastating for New Mexicans and communities across America, and for that reason I predict it is dead on arrival. Instead of 'making America great,' it will drastically weaken our economy and New Mexicans' health and well-being in order to spend billions of dollars on an unnecessary border wall that New Mexicans reject. Fortunately, this is just a proposal that has no force of law. While President Trump's blueprint would keep work at the labs going and provide further increases for defense spending, it's full of misguided cuts at the expense of middle class families and rural communities. I will always fight for investments in our labs and military bases, but there is no need to devastate the rest of the budget that is also important to New Mexico.

"President Trump's proposed budget impacts nearly every aspect of life and the economy in New Mexico. Deep cuts to science, clean energy research and development, space programs, health research, the Land and Water

Conservation Fund, and the arts and humanities would cripple engines for job creation in New Mexico. His cuts to affordable housing and his complete elimination of heating assistance and community development block grants would literally leave New Mexico families in the cold. Cuts to teacher preparation and before- and after-school and summer programs mean less opportunity for students to prepare for college. Cutting Interior Department agencies could reduce core services to American Indians and Alaska Natives, such as education and law enforcement - services that our nation has an obligation to provide. And cuts to everything from air traffic control to humanitarian aid and vaccinations that prevent the spread of dangerous diseases in developing nations would put New Mexicans at risk.

"This budget shows that President Trump has no understanding or respect for rural America. One of the most devastating cuts would be to the USDA water and wastewater loan program, which helps rural New Mexico communities provide water and sewer services. Unlike the previous administration, President Trump's budget fails to provide enough funding to cover the federal government's expected costs for fighting wildland fires. It also proposes to cut the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program, or PILT, which rural New Mexico counties rely on to compensate them for hosting federal lands and which helps them pay for roads, schools, and public safety. While he likes to fly in style, President Trump would eliminate the Essential Air Service, which helps Carlsbad, Clovis, Deming, Hurley and Silver City provide air travel and recruit business. And cuts to Amtrak almost certainly would eliminate the Southwest Chief and the tourist business it provides to Raton, Las Vegas and other communities.

"Slashing the Environmental Protection Agency's budget by almost a third -

when the EPA is already operating at historically low staffing levels - is a gift to polluters at the expense of communities like Farmington and colonias like Anthony and Chaparral. Cutting enforcement would endanger ongoing work to protect clean air and water, and a proposed 30 percent cut to the Superfund program could slow or stop the Gold King Mine cleanup. And President Trump's proposals would undermine our work to combat the impacts of climate change - effects that communities in New Mexico are seeing today and that will dramatically worsen for generations of Americans to come if we don't act now.

"Finally, while the idea of zeroing out the budgets for the national endowments for the arts and humanities is something Trump might love to tweet about, those draconian politically driven cuts are terrible for the economy. These agencies help strengthen the creative economy in New Mexico and across the nation. Not only would eliminating the NEA and NEH stifle programs that have enhanced our communities and inspired everyone from school kids in Albuquerque to entrepreneurs in Gallup, it also would mean the loss of hundreds of jobs in New Mexico alone, at the very time when we can least afford it.

"I am appalled by the dangerous priorities in President Trump's budget, and I will continue fighting for a budget that invests in working people and moves New Mexico forward."