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Poll: New Mexico Business Leaders Deeply Concerned About Government Favoritism & Influence

February 9, 2017 – Albuquerque, N.M. and Washington, D.C. – Today, a poll of New Mexico business leaders found that less than one in five of them think the state is headed in the right direction. Executives voiced their concerns about the considerable influence of money in politics, campaign finance and lobbying, among other issues, and expressed overwhelming support for reforms to minimize unscrupulous activity. The poll was sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED), a nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization, and conducted by Research & Polling, Inc.

251 business leaders from across the state were surveyed between December and January and identified the following areas of concerns:

- Consistent with the 2016 study, nearly nine-in-ten (86%) business leaders in New Mexico say that big campaign donors have either a *great deal of impact* (39%) or *some impact* (47%) on state government corruption.
- The vast majority (88%) of business leaders continue to say the ethical behavior of state elected officials over the past twenty years has been either a *somewhat* (40%) or *very serious* (48%) issue.
- Consistent with the previous study, approximately two-thirds (64%) of New Mexico business leaders feel that greater transparency is needed in regards to the disclosure of political contributions.

“Today, states face unprecedented competition when it comes to keeping and securing economic opportunities,” said Terri Cole, President and CEO, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce. “These findings reinforce why having a transparent, ethical New Mexico is a key part of the equation.”

“New Mexico’s business leaders want a level playing field – one where all have a fair shot at thriving in the marketplace,” said Ray Sandoval, President, Santa Fe Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “Ridding the state of government favoritism and strengthening transparency will go a long way toward achieving a sound, balanced environment for job creation.”

“Over the past three years New Mexico business leaders have become more critical about the overall direction that the state is heading, with the majority now feeling that things are heading on the wrong track,” said Brian Sanderoff, President, Research & Polling, Inc. “Business leaders are becoming more concerned about the influence of money in politics and they continue to support having additional transparency in how political campaigns are financed.”

New Mexico’s business leaders were also asked to rate their level of support for proposals that the state Legislature may consider adopting. Consistent with the previous studies, the vast majority of leaders support each proposal tested. In fact, support for each proposal has risen since the previous studies.

- Over nine-in-ten (92%) leaders *somewhat* (17%) or *strongly support* (75%) the proposal requiring all political contributions and expenditures from individuals, corporations, political action committees (PACs), non-profits, or unions be made public.
- Over eight-in-ten (83%) leaders say they *somewhat* or *strongly support* the creation of an independent Ethics Commission to establish and enforce rules regarding the ethical behavior and actions of state officials. Of note, 82% were supportive in the 2016 study and 76% were supportive in the 2015 study.
- The vast majority (89%) of business leaders either *strongly* (66%) or *somewhat support* (23%) continuing to place limits on how much individuals and PACs can give to candidates. The percentage of leaders who are *strongly supportive* has increased since the previous study (66% currently compared to 59% in the 2016 study).

- An increase since the 2016 study, nearly nine-in-ten (88%) leaders currently say they *somewhat* or *strongly support* reforming New Mexico’s gross receipts tax laws and exemptions (79% were supportive in the 2016 study).
- Eight-in-ten (79%) leaders say they *somewhat* or *strongly support* restricting the number of no-bid contracts that are given to private businesses by state government (77% were supportive in the 2016 study).

“These findings reveal that business leaders overwhelmingly back practical solutions to address government favoritism,” said Bryan Chippeaux, Chairman, Century Bank. “As just one example, those surveyed strongly support the creation of an independent ethics commission.”

“These findings suggest that New Mexico’s business community can serve as one of the state’s most potent voices for improving transparency and ethics in government,” said Simon Brackley, President and CEO, Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce.

“For New Mexico’s economy to fire on all cylinders, the state needs a government with both greater transparency and ethics,” said Ray Smith, President, Klinger Constructors. “In light of these findings, policymakers now have the blessing from one of the state’s largest constituencies – the business community – to move forward with reform.”

The poll and its methodology can be [read here](#).

About the Committee for Economic Development

Founded in 1942, the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions to our nation’s most critical issues. CED’s work is grounded on seven core principles: sustainable capitalism, long-term economic growth, efficient fiscal and regulatory policy, competitive and open markets, a globally competitive workforce, equal economic opportunity, and nonpartisanship in the nation’s interest. Learn more at www.ced.org.