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Poll: New Mexico Business Leaders Believe Ethical Behavior Impacts Economic Prosperity

February 5, 2019 – Albuquerque, N.M. and Washington, D.C. – Today, a poll of New Mexico business leaders found that nearly four in five of them think the ethical behavior of state elected officials has had a negative impact on the economic development in the state.

Executives voiced their views on the soon to be established Independent Ethics Commission and about the considerable influence of money in politics, campaign finance and transparency. They expressed overwhelming support for reforms to minimize unscrupulous activity. The poll was sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development (CED), a nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization, and conducted by Research & Polling, Inc.

“Without faith in our government, we cannot fulfill the promise of New Mexico’s economic development potential,” said Ray Sandoval, President, Santa Fe Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. “CED’s research demonstrates how trust in government is fundamental to economic success.

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

- When asked about the overall impact that ethical behavior of elected officials has on economic development of the state, 51% of New Mexico business leaders reported a “somewhat negative” impact, with another 27% believing that impact to be “very negative.”
- Consistent with the 2017 study, the vast majority (86%) of business leaders continue to say the ethical behavior of state elected officials over the past twenty years has been either a *somewhat* (52%) or *very serious* (34%) issue.
- On a positive note, a higher percentage of business leaders feel that things in New Mexico are headed in the right direction (23%) compared to the percentage from 2017 (16%). A lower percentage of leaders feel that things are off on the wrong track, (33%) compared to the percentage from 2017 (58%).

“The findings of the poll reinforce that transparency in the ethics process in New Mexico is key to advancing economic prosperity in New Mexico,” said Terri Cole, President and CEO, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce.

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 polling conducted in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, the vast majority of leaders support each proposal tested.

- Over nine-in-ten (91%) leaders *somewhat* (14%) or *strongly support* (77%) 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 (86%) leaders say they *somewhat* or *strongly support* the proposal requiring that all

independent political groups who are spending money on campaigns report who their donors are and how the money is being spent.

“Encouraging and strengthening transparency by the government will level the playing and therefore improve New Mexico’s economy said, Ray Smith, President, Klinger Constructors, LLC. “Bringing transparency to campaign finance will reinvigorate the marketplace.”

In November 2018, New Mexico voters overwhelmingly passed the constitutional amendment to create an Independent Ethics Commission with a three quarters majority. New Mexico state legislators are currently determining how the commission will operate. The New Mexico business leaders were asked to rate the overall importance of various elements of the Independent Ethics Commission, including:

- **Non-Partisanship:** 97% of business leaders feel that it is extremely important that the Commission should be as non-partisan and independent as possible.
- **Qualifications:** 95% of the participants think it is extremely important to appoint commissioners who are well-qualified and free of any past ethical complaints.
- **Credibility:** 94% of New Mexico business leaders believe that each credible complaint filed should receive a thorough and fair investigation.
- **Transparency:** 79% of business leaders think that the process by which each case is investigated should be transparent and communicated to the public, while 77% feel that details of the Commission’s findings and outcome of each investigation should be released to the public.

“The influence that money in politics has on our democratic institutions has long been a concern for business leaders,” said Simon Brackley, President and CEO, Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce. “These findings highlight the need for a higher degree of transparency from our state government officials.”

About the Committee for Economic Development

Founded in 1942, the Committee for Economic Development 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.