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ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 27, 2021

ABQJOURNAL.COM

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\$1.50



LEGISLATURE 2021

Gov.: Schools can reopen Feb. 8

State of the State speech also calls for \$200 million outlay
for broadband improvements, legalizing marijuana use for adults

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BY DAN MCKAY
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said Tuesday that New Mexico is preparing to expand in-person learning for students of all ages within two weeks — a plan she revealed in her annual State of the State address to lawmakers.

In recorded remarks, the governor said “every school district in the state will be able to welcome all ages of students safely back to the classroom on Feb. 8.”

New Mexico public schools now offer little in-person learning under public health regulations designed to limit the spread of COVID-19. They have been largely shut down since March, when the pandemic first reached the state.

The governor's talk was delivered remotely this year because of the pandemic. The Capitol building itself is closed to the public.

In the 25-minute speech, Lujan Grisham called on legislators to dedicate at least \$200 million of their capital outlay package to broadband investment and embrace a host of progressive priorities on the environment, education and the economy.

She also highlighted a new push to get students back on campus. Lujan Grisham said her administration has worked with educators, doctors and



Michelle Lujan Grisham



EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

Desks in a first grade classroom at El Camino Real Academy in Santa Fe are spaced 9 feet apart in October to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some students in Santa Fe returned to school under the hybrid model in the fall.

See **GOV. OUTLINES** >> A6

High school sports can resume

NMAA can begin its sports calendar Feb. 22, with restrictions. **SPORTS, B1**

Districts to decide when schools reopen

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BY SHELBY PEREA AND KYLE LAND
JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

Middle and high school students could soon be back in the classroom, which for most will be the first time since schools were shuttered last March.

In-person learning could be expanded to include more elementary schools and the older grades starting on Feb. 8, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Tuesday.

But allowing students back in a limited capacity — under three options available to districts and charter schools — will be up to local school boards and charter leaders.

And families may also opt for fully remote learning even if their school is opening.

David Peercy, the president of Albuquerque Pub-

See **DISTRICTS** >> A6



EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

Billie Ahern delivers lunch to Antonio Lopez on the patio at the Boxcar restaurant in Santa Fe on Tuesday. Lawmakers are considering a relief package that would help restaurants, bars and other small businesses.

'Fusion voting' proposed

Minor parties could nominate major party candidates. **A6**

Online

For more coverage of the 60-day legislative session, go to **ABQJournal.com**.



Relief bill with \$600 tax rebates advances

Small firms, essential workers targeted

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BY DAN BOYD
JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU

SANTA FE — As New Mexico's legislative session enters its second week, lawmakers are forging ahead with a new relief package aimed at helping essential workers, restaurants, bars and other small businesses through the final throes of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two relief bills were approved without dissent Tuesday by a Senate committee, while other measures could be voted on later this week.

One of the fast-tracked bills would give a \$600 cash rebate to low-income New Mexico workers — or those earning \$31,200 or less annually — and provide a four-month tax break for restaurants and breweries hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One thing we know for sure is the working poor who make

See **RELIEF** >> A2

Sandia Labs increased spending, hiring in 2020

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BY RYAN BOETEL
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The global pandemic didn't slow down spending at Sandia National Laboratories, which increased its workforce and total outlays in the 2020 fiscal year.

All told, Sandia spent \$3.76 billion in the fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. That includes \$1.67 billion in payroll, and \$1.4 billion in purchases of goods and services, of which \$482.6 million went to New Mexico businesses.

The labs' spending marked an \$86.8 million increase from the previous fiscal year, according to an economic impact analysis by the labs that was published Tuesday.

“We had a really, really good year in terms of the

See **SANDIA** >> A14

Albuquerque again ranked best city for filmmaking

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BY ADRIAN GOMEZ
JOURNAL ARTS EDITOR

It's a three-peat.

On Tuesday, MovieMaker Magazine named Albuquerque the No. 1 place to “live and work as a filmmaker” in the big cities category.

This is the third year in a row Albuquerque has received the designation. The Duke City also held the top title in 2019 and has made the list every year since 2007. It fell out of the top 10 just once, when it ranked No. 11 in 2013.

In addition, MovieMaker listed Santa Fe at No. 2 in this year's small cities and towns category.

The trade magazine compiles its annual list by looking at each city's film activity — the number of productions, economic activity generated and



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Tom Hanks, right, in a scene from “News of the World.” The project filmed in and around Santa Fe for 53 days.

See **ALBUQUERQUE** >> A14