

**Monday, March 17, 2025**

**Ambush At The Roundhouse: Progressives Reel As Conservative Dems Stage Unexpected Comeback; They Resurrect Coalition With R's; Paid Family Leave Plan Left In Dust In Surprise At Senate Finance**

Progressive Democrats spent major league dollars and countless campaign hours [to defeat](#) the conservative coalition in the state House in the June 2024 primary only to be ambushed by the resurrection of a coalition in the state senate Saturday.

The surprise attack spelled the end of their cherished paid family and medical leave plan as it was [firmly rejected](#) by the Senate Finance Committee, led by unapologetic Chairman [George Muñoz](#).

The stunning turn of events over ([HB 11](#)), which was defeated when the House was peppered with those now defeated conservative Democrats but approved by the Senate, finally sailed through the House this year. Then Saturday in Senate Finance sudden death struck on an 8 to 3 vote, leaving Roundhouse progressives grieving their loss, like this one:

*Joe, we cut off the head of the snake in the House only to see it grow back in the Senate. The shock is like an earthquake in the middle of the night.*

Indeed. Tremors were felt across La Politica:

*Three Democrats who voted for the bill in past years voted against it Saturday: Sens. Pete Campos of Las Vegas, Benny Shendo of Jemez Pueblo and Roberto "Bobby" Gonzales of Ranchos de Taos.*

Sen. Muñoz has long opposed the plan as have GOP committee members. With the new Dem votes they killed the bill and delivered a body blow to the dominant left wing of the Democratic party.

The measure, always controversial, was complicated this time by progressive overreach.

It included a new provision that would have the state give the family of every newborn a \$9,000 cash payment estimated to cost nearly \$200 million a year. The giveaway arose out of thin air like one of those Oklahoma tornadoes.

While groundwork may have been laid for it in solid progressive states, it didn't sell in low-paying New Mexico where small businesses often struggle to make a profit.

## IRONY GALORE

There was irony galore as Dem Rep. [Christine Chandler](#) was the chief House [sponsor](#). She hails from Los Alamos, not only the wealthiest county in the state but one of the richest in the the entire [USA](#). The main employer is Los Alamos Labs with some of the highest salaries in the state and plenty of perks, including paid leave.

## TAX RESENTMENT

The small tax increase in the measure to finance up to six weeks of paid medical leave for employees (12 weeks for family leave) provided more ammo for the ambush squad.

Never mind that the increases were only a fraction of a percent. They were the equivalent of a kick in the you-know-what for employees and employers in the face of billions in oil surplus funds that Santa Fe is struggling to deploy effectively.

It didn't help progressives that the '24 general election results revealed an emerging conservative streak among economically impacted voters, with Trump losing here by a respectable six percent.

Could it be that those handful of conservative House Dems taken out by the left at the '24 primary fell because of the red-hot abortion issue and not because of their economics? (Yes, it could.)

## UNCOMPROMISING PROGRESSIVES



*Senator Muñoz*

Senator Muñoz was confident enough to offer a compromise but the progressives would not deal. Appraising the battlefield in the aftermath, he [declared](#):

*The bill is too extreme. . . We can never take a baby step. If you have just mothers with 12 weeks (leave) and families taking care of parents for medical assistance, I'd vote for this all day long.*

The progressive hubris (or cluelessness) was on full display when GOP state Rep. Rebecca Dow came to the table with a compromise but was laughed out of the room:

*Dow's substitute proposal called for six weeks of paid parental leave that would be funded by the state Early Childhood Education and Care Fund. Three weeks of supplemental paid leave would be available to employees who chose to contribute to a proposed supplemental fund. The chamber voted it down 40-29.*

*"I have been asked why Republicans won't compromise and why do we bring bills that are unreasonable. This was a reasonable compromise... and it was disregarded," she said.*

Of course Republicans rejoiced (cackled?) over the victory in Senate Finance, but failed to mention Dow's bill, losing another opportunity to move to the center as their candidates continue to get hammered at the polls.

The rebirth of a conservative coalition over HB 11 doesn't necessarily mean it is here to stay but there is a chance it could.

Saturday's ambush was a reassertion of coalition politics that amazingly have been almost a constant since statehood. It was also a humbling reminder of the unpredictability of politics in our diverse Land of Enchantment.

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