

BUSINESS

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Businesses 'Slept' in Last Election

Legislature Took Turn to the Left

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Albuquerque Journal

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New Mexico business people were asleep at the wheel in the last election cycle, allowing a free flow of out-of-state political money to propel progressive and anti-business candidates into the state Legislature, the president of the Association of Commerce and Industry told the Economic Forum on

Wednesday. ACI is working to make sure that does not happen again, Beverlee McClure said.

McClure said ACI, Economic Forum, NAIOP and other business groups will back conservative and business-friendly candidates in the next election cycle and challenge candidates supported by Better Choices, which she said



MCCLURE:
Says businesses "paying the price"

helped several progressive candidates oust more conservative incumbent legislators in the 2008 elections.

Among Better Choices' 33 members are labor unions, the League of Women Voters, the New Mexico Conference of Churches and other religious organizations, Voices for Children, Planned Parenthood and New Energy Economy.

ACI has also created a public-relations campaign designed to support conservative and pro-business lawmakers when they are targeted by progressives, she said.

The new, more left-leaning Legislature, especially in the

House, attempted in the last session to balance the state's budget by raising taxes on the private sector, which McClure said would have damaged businesses' ability to create jobs. She said ACI and other business groups spent most of that session trying to head off damaging tax increases, including increases in marginal personal income tax rates that would have robbed small businesses of the money they need to expand and hire.

"We slept through the last election cycle," McClure said. "We're paying the price for that."

McClure did not identify legislators ACI is targeting, but she praised Enterprise Builders president David Doyle's plan to challenge Rep. Benjamin H. Rodefer, D-Corralles.

The budget-balancing legislation that passed during the recently concluded special session was "the best of a worst-case scenario," she said. "In some sense, our message was heard. In some sense, they met us half way."

However, the special session budget assumes what McClure said was an unrealistically optimistic 6 percent increase in revenue coming into state coffers.