



new energy economy

Addressing the Climate Challenge
With Bold Solutions

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Tainted Vote on “WATR Alliance” Petition Vacated!

Emails reveal Governor Lujan Grisham’s administration conspired to predetermine Water Quality Control Commission votes on WATR Alliance fracking waste discharge petition.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Santa Fe, NM — WQCC Vacates Tainted Vote on WATR Alliance Petition After Public Outcry and Evidence of Political Interference

Santa Fe, NM — Today, after *dozens upon dozens* of New Mexicans testified and three formal motions were filed demanding accountability, the Water Quality Control Commission voted to vacate its tainted July 8 decision to advance the WATR Alliance petition — a proposal that would have opened the door to discharging toxic fracking waste across New Mexico.

The motions submitted by New Energy Economy and allied environmental advocates documented internal emails showing that Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s office and Environment Secretary James Kenney coordinated behind closed doors to predetermine Commission votes before the public meeting. This coordination violates state law, constitutional due process, and the Commission’s own rules requiring impartiality and independence.

In May, the Commission concluded an 18-month rulemaking process establishing that oil-and-gas waste — known as “produced water” — cannot safely be reused or discharged outside the oilfield. Less than 30 days later, the industry-aligned WATR Alliance filed a petition to overturn these science-based protections. Internal emails show the Governor’s Office pressured Commissioners to fast-track the petition, move the hearing to the oil patch, and require Cabinet Secretaries — not designees — to appear and vote in lockstep with predetermined instructions. (Emails referenced are attached separately.)

These communications reveal that the Governor’s staff held secret strategy “huddles” with Cabinet Secretaries, directing them to occupy their Commission seats, to support the WATR petition, and to “get it over the finish line.” Officials were urged to move the hearing away from Santa Fe in violation of long-established Commission practice. This was not neutral deliberation — it was political choreography designed to benefit the oil and gas industry.

Today, the Commission took the necessary step of vacating that tainted vote.

“This is a huge victory for the people,” said Mariel Nanasi, Executive Director of New Energy Economy. “The WATR Alliance petition was defective on its face and unsupported by science, and therefore unlawful. The July 8 vote was not the act of a neutral Commission — it was the product of bias, undue influence, and a predetermined outcome. Vacating the July vote and dismissing the petition were the only ways to restore the Commission’s integrity, comply with the Constitution, and honor the trust that New Mexicans place in it to safeguard our most vital resource — water. And it’s because the people stood up, spoke out, and the press amplified their voices that we won.”

New Mexicans made themselves heard — and today, the Water Quality Control Commission listened.