

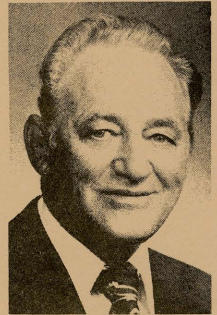
Northeast Today

May 2, 1977

On Sunday night, Senate President Pro Tempore Norman L. Merrell successfully amended Bill No. 7 to raise NMSU appropriation recommendations to an 8 percent increase for Fiscal Year 1978. The recommendation significantly increases the 2 percent recommendation by the Coordinating Board, Governor, and House of Representatives. The action taken by the Senate Appropriations Committee must now be presented to the full Senate, probably later this week.

In offering the amendment, Senator Merrell said, "I believe Northeast has acted responsibly in its budget request. This year's request of a 13.97 percent increase is the lowest of any college or university. Last year's appropriation of a 6.4 percent increase also was the lowest of any college or university. All I'm asking is that NMSU be treated fairly."

Senator Merrell pointed out to the Committee that the student/faculty ratio at Northeast is reasonable and that the University offers a quality educational experience for its students. The Merrell amendment was approved by the committee on an 8-0 vote. Northeast was the only school whose recommendation was increased by the Senate Appropriations Committee.



On related issues, Senator Merrell expressed disappointment that the Coordinating Board for Higher Education has developed funding recommendations at such an early stage in its existence. "I think (members of the appropriations committee) will agree that the purpose for the creation of the Coordinating Board through the Reorganization Act was to end duplication of programs among campuses, as well as to make studies of the education needs of the state. Making funding recommendations was a bad place for them to start," Senator Merrell stated.

While the news of the Senate Appropriations Committee action is good, three critical steps in the appropriations process remain: (1) the Senate as a body must act on the recommendations of the Appropriations Committee (our recommendation can be either decreased or increased on the Senate floor); (2) differences in the Senate and the House recommendations must be resolved by a joint House/Senate Conference Committee and agreed to by both bodies; (3) finally, after both the Senate and House agree to a recommendation, the Governor may either sign the bill or veto any part of the bill which is in excess of his recommendation. Regardless of what happens in the process just described, HAD THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE LAST NIGHT NOT ADOPTED THE MERRELL AMENDMENT, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF CHANGING THE 2 PERCENT RECOMMENDATION.

I think each student, faculty member, and administrator will want to join me in sending a hearty thanks to Senator Norman L. Merrell, his staff (including Estil Fretwell--NMSU 1974 alumnus), and the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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Senator Merrell's address: The Honorable Norman L. Merrell
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