

**Correction:** June 2, 2020

*Corrected to reflect the Spaceport Authority has 9 members and Michelle Coons is currently with WaFd Bank.*



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes  
Deputy Secretary Jon Clark

June 2, 2020

## **Governor Names Appointees to Spaceport Authority**

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has appointed three new members to the New Mexico Spaceport Authority and re-appointed four other members, Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today.

The Spaceport Authority is administratively attached to the New Mexico Economic Development Department. It consists of nine members; six are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the State Senate. The lieutenant-governor (or designee), the cabinet secretary of the Economic Development Department, and the Spaceport Authority Executive Director are also members. By statute, no more than three of the appointed members shall belong to the same political party.

The new appointees are Ethan Epstein of Los Rancho, Peggy S. Johnson of Williamsburg and Eric J. Schindwolf of Tijeras. The members reappointed are Michelle A. Coons of Albuquerque, Laura Conniff of Las Cruces, and Richard Holdridge of Deming.

**Ethan Epstein** is a founding principal with Epstein and Company and with New Mexico Tax Credit Alliance. He has served as a member of the U.S. Military Academy Board of Visitors at West Point along with various other local charitable boards. Epstein is also the former Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for New Mexico, where he worked closely on military issues concerning White Sands Missile Range involving critical air and space evaluation of various cutting-edge technological advancements much like the sophisticated innovations employed at its neighboring Spaceport America. Epstein received a B.S. from the United States Military Academy at West Point, a J.D. from the George Mason School of Law, and an LLM (Taxation) from the New York University School of Law.

**Peggy S. Johnson** is a native of Truth or Consequences, N.M. and has retired to the area. She served as mayor of that city and as city commissioner. In her professional life, Johnson worked in a variety of finance and administrative positions, including for the FBI in Washington, D.C.; the Arabian American Oil Company in Saudi Arabia; Miner's Colfax Medical Center in Raton, and the N.M. Veterans Center.

**Eric J. Schindwolf** served as the Deputy Director of Strike Systems & Aerospace Technologies in the Integrated Military Systems Development Program at Sandia National Laboratories from 2004 until his retirement in 2016. Since his retirement, he has been a consultant for Sandia National Laboratories and served as an independent

advisor/reviewer for the Pentagon's numerous hypersonic programs. He is currently advising the Navy in evaluating advanced technology insertion into the Conventional Prompt Strike hypersonic spiral development efforts and is a consultant for the Universities Space Research Association.

Reappointed members include Michelle Coons, who has a long career in banking and finance and is now New Mexico Regional President with WaFd Bank; Laura Conniff, the Qualifying Broker for Mathers Realty, Inc. and owner of Leveldale Farms and Conniff Cattle Company; and Richard Holdridge, a retired Air Force Officer with a PhD in Astronautical Engineering from Stanford University.

Cabinet Secretary Keyes will serve as the Chair of the Spaceport Authority. "The New Mexico Spaceport Authority is transitioning into a new era of operations and I look forward to invigorating the Board to support current clients and to recruit additional aerospace companies to the state and grow this exciting economic sector," Keyes said.

Spaceport America is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in Southern New Mexico. It is currently hosts flight testing and operations with Virgin Galactic, Boeing, UP Aerospace, EXOS Aerospace, HyperSciences and SpinLaunch.

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