

# Press Release

## Lea County Appoints Sheriff

### Lea County Courthouse, Lovington, NM:

On February 6, 2017, the Lea County Board of County Commissioners (LCBOCC) voted unanimously to appoint Byron Wester as the Lea County Sheriff.

Lea County Commission Chair District 3 Ron Black stated "Byron Wester has the educational background, the training and the experience to be an outstanding sheriff. I am very familiar with the success the Lea County Drug Force has had under his leadership and expect he will operate the Lea County Sheriff's office with the same degree of excellence. There were several very strong candidates for the position and the fact that he was selected unanimously speaks volumes about the commission's confidence in Byron."

Sheriff Wester wrote in his application letter "Out of seventeen years of Law Enforcement, fifteen of those have been working in Lea County. Those fifteen years have provided me with unique knowledge of what is occurring within our county. My experience affords me the knowledge and ability to focus on high crime areas and focus on criminal organizations within our area. Therefore I can effectively place resources within the county to effectively and efficiently combat the criminal element."

Commissioner District 4 Jonathan Sena said "Byron Wester has cultivated a dynamic track record of fighting crime and engaging members of the community. I support Sheriff Wester and his team as they work to make Lea County families safe."

NM Statute states that the county commission is responsible for filling a vacancy left by the death or resignation of an elected official with the exception of a county commissioner. Sheriff Steve Ackerman left that vacancy on January 17 in a fatal vehicle accident.

Commissioner District 2 Vice Chair Rebecca Long expressed "We had many great candidates step up to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Sheriff Ackerman. The commission appointed Byron Wester as our Lea County Sheriff and we look forward to great leadership from him."

Fifth Judicial District Judge Gary Clingman administered the oath to Sheriff Wester shortly after 2:30 pm Monday. After taking the oath, Sheriff Wester thanked his supporters and briefly told the audience that he intends to continue the Sheriff Office goals set by Ackerman. Wester said "we will keep it going in that direction and we'll finish it out for him." Wester's appointment will complete the last two years of Ackerman's four year term.

Lea County Manager Mike Gallagher said "I am looking forward to working with Sheriff Wester. His law enforcement career for the past fifteen years performing his duties here in Lea County as a State Police

Officer and Commander of the Lea County Drug Task Force has given him invaluable knowledge and experience in Lea County.”

Lea County Commissioner District 1 Dean Jackson stated “I believe the citizens of Lea County have the best qualified sheriff the commission could have chosen. I look forward to working with Sheriff Wester in the future.”

Commissioner District 5 Don Jones commented “I was very pleased with the quality of applicants that applied for the sheriff position. They did an excellent job in their interviews. The decision was a hard one. I hope and pray we made the right choice. Good luck to Sheriff Byron Wester.”

STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
COUNTY OF LEA  
RESOLUTION NO. 17-FEB-034R

A RESOLUTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF LEA COUNTY SHERIFF

**WHEREAS**, on January 17, 2017, the position of Lea County Sheriff became vacant due to the untimely death of Sheriff Stephen L. Ackerman; and

**WHEREAS**, NMSA 1978 § 10-3-3 states it is the duty of the Board of County Commissioners of the county where such vacancy has occurred to fill said vacancy by appointment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners of Lea County adopted at its meeting on January 26, 2017, an application process for those wishing to be considered by the Board for appointment as Sheriff of Lea County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners has now reviewed the applications of those persons who submitted such applications on or before February 2, 2017; and

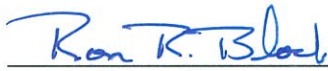
**WHEREAS**, each applicant, desiring to do so, has personally and timely appeared before the Board of County Commissioners; and

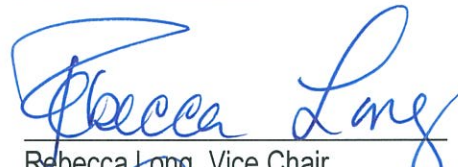
**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners has voted on the applicants and such votes have been recorded by the Lea County Clerk.


**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Board of County Commissioners of Lea County that     **Roland Byron Wester**     is hereby appointed Lea County Sheriff.

**PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED** by the governing body at its meeting February 6, 2017.

LEA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ron R. Black, Chair  
Voted:  Yes   No   Abstain

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecca Long, Vice Chair  
Voted:  Yes   No   Abstain


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean Jackson, Member  
Voted:  Yes   No   Abstain

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan Sena, Member  
Voted:  Yes   No   Abstain



Richard Don Jones, Member  
Voted:  Yes   No   Abstain

**ATTEST:**    Keith Manes  
                  Lea County Clerk

By:   
Tryon Hassen, Chief Deputy Clerk

**APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL  
SUFFICIENCY:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John W. Caldwell, County Attorney

