



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
Santa Fe

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The New Mexico House of Representatives will come to order.

Good afternoon and welcome Honorable members of the House, family members of our distinguished Representatives, Father Santillanes, Senator Udall, Honorable Congressman Lujan and esteemed staff and representatives of our congressional offices, Honorable Governors and Lt. Governors of our great State, Honorable Judges of our Judiciary, Honorable Tribal Leaders, distinguished guests, staff and friends.

As we open this legislative session, I want to share with you something that even my closest friends and many of my family will hear for the first time. Carmen, our children and I have spent many days about how best to share something so personal and intimate. And I sincerely apologize to my family, my dear friends, the people of New Mexico and to all of you, my members for not sharing this with you sooner.

One week after our 50th wedding celebration in October of 2009, a beautiful day that so many of you shared with Carmen and I, I was not feeling well and went to see my doctor.

One month later in November of 2009, with Carmen and my children at my side, a medical team of doctors at the University of New Mexico Cancer Center gave me their prognosis that I had stage 4 lung cancer. This I am certain, is the result of exposure to asbestos in my early days working on the hill in Los Alamos. By December of 2009 and during the session in 2010, I was receiving intensive chemotherapy treatment every 2 to 3 weeks, which had a positive impact on fighting the cancer. The team of doctors, nurses and staff at UNM are talented and do an extraordinary job, and I appreciate them and their commitment.

From May to June in 2010, for five weeks leading up to the primary election in June and one week after, my doctors started radiation treatment **every day** for those six weeks. I thank my dear wife and children for being at my side as we started each day. Every morning by 7:00 am, Carmen and I would start our routine drive to Albuquerque for radiation treatment. As you can imagine it was tough both physically and emotionally on the family and me. As you can see, this intense treatment, all took place during the peak of my campaign for re-election in 2010.

As a family, we gave stopping the cancer a top priority. But there was also important work to be done for the people of New Mexico. So it was important to Carmen and I to make that sacrifice and commitment. It was a choice that we don't regret. Sadly, I was heavily criticized that my absence on the campaign trail was a reflection of complacency, taking constituents for granted, and taking the campaign lightly. Quite the opposite is true. I know the importance of hard work and sacrifice, and not taking people for granted. Sadly, even though no one knew I was under intensive treatment to stop the cancer from spreading, the media had their heyday. Even during the special session, Carmen and I would make the trek for Chemo treatments at night.

Under the circumstances, during my quiet fight against this cancer, **the unfortunate** attacks on my leadership, my integrity and my commitment during the special session, regular session, and the campaign, and the contentious environment it created, sadly took a tremendous toll on me and my family, which we dealt with privately. But even despite the biggest of challenges, I endured to make a difference, worked to fulfill my obligations and duties, and keep the operations of this House in order, always keeping in mind that I did not want to let you or the people of New Mexico down.

Even though I will not be running for re-election, as we approached this session I was hoping to tell you the cancer was gone, but as you can see it is not. But know this, with Carmen, my family and friends, and my faith in God, this is a fight I will not shy away from. While this has taken a toll on me physically it has not broken my spirit, my will, my faith and my commitment

to New Mexico. I take this time to share this very personal information with you --- because Carmen and I feel that we, --- the people of New Mexico and all of my colleagues, --- truly are a family from all walks of life **brought together** by our common passion to make a difference and serve others. Through all my years of service, I deeply appreciate that despite our politics, our philosophical differences, our emotional debate, that deep down we all care about one another as members of this family and this great institution.

It is in that spirit that I share this with you today. Carmen, my family and I appreciate the many prayers and all the support over the last several weeks. As we convene here today, we are convening on the centennial birthday of our beloved State of New Mexico. I want to express my appreciation for the confidence, the trust and the honor that you and others before you have entrusted me to serve as the Majority Whip, the Majority Floor Leader and as your Speaker of the House. Few have ever been given this privilege and I have always been humbled with this trust and confidence.

I called this House to order using the gavel that the first Speaker of the New Mexico House of Representatives, Speaker R.L. Baca used to call the House to order in 1912. It is an honor to have this privilege. Mr. Ronald Latiaer, the grandson of Speaker Baca is here today and made the use of this gavel possible. Ronald, please stand. Ronald, thank you for being here and sharing such a precious piece of history with all of us on this Centennial Anniversary.

On the centennial of our Great State, we are facing unprecedented challenges no different than what our forefathers faced in their first session 100 years ago. These are difficult times for all New Mexicans as more workers are out of work than any other time in our history. The poverty levels continue to rise and more children are going to bed hungry and health care is becoming out of reach for too many people.

I have seen first hand the importance of access to healthcare for all. I have learned that being diagnosed with a chronic condition, like cancer, can happen to anyone. These conditions beg us to come together and put aside our differences and work together for their common benefit. Let's make history and pursue this course together in a bi-partisan way. As we look toward the next 100 years, we must be driven by the same courage and vision of our forefathers that there will be better days ahead. The last hundred years reflect the resilience of our people. That should be our inspiration!

Perhaps this should be the occasion that we stop to rethink our strategies to create a vibrant future for our children that we all desire. Let us make our time on Earth, especially during this session worthwhile, and do what's right, and make a difference for the children, our working families, and our elderly. I want to encourage us to come together for them. Nowhere is it more important that we come together as it is in charting the course of creating the best educational opportunities for learning for our children.

We must all be willing to collectively define a comprehensive education vision for our children where the richness of our cultures, languages and heritage is not compromised. Our children, their parents and our hard working teachers cannot bear the burden of our collective failures. They cannot be the victims of partisan strategies and approaches that piece meal our approach to education reform. *We* should have the courage to come together with stakeholders, and that includes New Mexicans, to create opportunities for their inclusion to define that vision of promise for all children and for our collective well-being. Education cannot be the victim of partisan politics.

The budget must reflect our priorities on education, health care for all New Mexicans and investments at appropriate levels to jump-start our economy to put our people back to work. Carving out additional revenues at a time when the economy is still fragile and the revenue projections still dim, perhaps it is not the right time to gut the revenue stream. As we chart the course for the next 100 years, we must strengthen the foundation for future generations so they might enjoy the richness of our cultures, traditions, the spirit of our people, the majesty of our lands, and the environment within which these elements that are central to our quality of life can continue to thrive and remain vibrant. And at the same time sustain the spirit that defines New Mexico as the Land of Enchantment.

The hard work of the Legislative Finance Committee is clear evidence that working in a bi-partisan way is possible. The budget they have put together is the result of the work of our Interim Committees. They have travelled the state to hear the voices of New Mexicans. Their recommendations have been prioritized and are reflected in the investment of our resources to address their needs. I thank our House members and our excellent staffs who have worked so hard to put this budget together.

It is my hope that the Governor will focus her efforts to work with us to strengthen our economy, and concentrate on job creation. **That is what New Mexicans want**, and they deserve our full effort and attention to that goal. Strengthening the economy and job creation must be our focus

during this session. It is my hope this Administration will stay focused on the economy and not get distracted.

I wish each one of you my best wishes for a successful session and I look forward to working with all of you on behalf of people of our great state. Let's make this session a work of art, working in a spirit of cooperation as we take the first step toward the next one hundred years. We should never give up, we must preserve in our pursuit to do good, make a difference and **treat every man, woman, and child with respect and dignity**. It is with my faith in God, in family, in each of you, and in the people of the Great State of New Mexico, that I am before you today.

Thank you, and May God Bless **Each and Every One** of you!

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