



# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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## **THE PRESIDENTS REPORT 2020**

Past Presidents, Fellow Officers, Members of the Board, Municipal Officials, New Mexico Municipal League and New Mexico Self Insurers Fund Staff, and Esteemed Guests it is my honor to present to you The President's Report.

For the first time in history of the New Mexico Municipal League, this Annual Conference, our 63<sup>rd</sup>, will convene in a virtual format.

Last year, Immediate Past President David Israelevitz concluded his President's Report with this Spanish adage...

“Caminar con un amigo en la oscuridad es mejor que caminar solo en la luz.”

“It is better to walk with a friend even in darkness, than it is to walk in daylight alone.”

No truer words have been spoken. This year we faced three events—the untimely death of the New Mexico Municipal League's long-term executive director, Bill Fulginiti, who we will remember today, a pandemic named Covid-19, and a steep economic downturn that significantly impacted and changed the way our part of the world and our larger society function. Individually, these events would be impactful, but collectively they shook us to our core and caused us to rise to the occasion.

I am thankful that we faced these challenges together—including the loss of Bill. I know that none of us expected, least of all me, that the New

Mexico Municipal League Board of Directors would undertake one of its most important duties—appointing an Executive Director, AJ Forte.

AJ and Bill were cut from the same cloth. I am confident in the knowledge that the League is in excellent hands and the future success of the League is ensured.

This historic virtual Annual Conference is but one example of the many adaptive strategies that we, as elected officials, staff of municipalities, and members of the League family, continue to develop to secure the health and welfare of our residents and the future of our communities as well as the New Mexico Municipal League. Together we navigated and overcame the pandemic's constraints of being unable to meet and connect in person by conducting the League's business virtually and found unexpected silver linings. By staggering individual Policy Committees on different dates and times via Zoom, a number of people were able to serve on multiple committees thereby increasing inclusion in the League's Policy Process. This is something that is practically impossible to accomplish during our traditional one-day in-person simultaneous Policy Committee meetings. Under Rio Rancho Mayor Gregg Hull's leadership, the Mayors Caucus has met via Zoom almost weekly to raise concerns and discuss issues facing our municipalities.

While we will miss having our traditional in-person lunches and evening events during our first virtual Annual Conference, I know that League staff have developed a set of sessions and speakers that continue the tradition of providing members with the most up-to-date information.

As always, our subsections will meet as will our Credentials and Resolutions Committees. Voting delegates from each municipality will meet during our Annual Business Meeting to elect League Officers and Directors-at-large, and to vote on League Resolutions and the Statement of Municipal Policy for the upcoming year. This year, our ringing in of the beginning of the League's new year will be held via a virtual social hour on Thursday from 5:30-7:00pm. I hope that you and your loved ones will join me and RJ, members of the League Executive Committee and Board, and the League staff and their loved ones online to toast the close of our Annual Conference and our League New Year!

Like each one of the individual 106 incorporated cities, towns, and villages of New Mexico represented here today our New Mexico Municipal League is strong, resilient, and adaptable. While individual municipalities and the League continue to face challenges we cannot foresee, working together and with our partners we will continue to advocate for positive state legislation for municipalities through our policy process; and, we will stand together against legislation that is not conducive to our interests.

I believe that our success as individual municipalities and as a League, is, in part, because each one of us serves our communities with *querencia*, which the late Rudolfo Anaya defined as *love of home, love of place*. And, I do believe that this *querencia* is what strengthens our message with the Legislature and the Governor that healthy municipalities are the foundation of a healthy state.

Like the late Rudolfo Anaya, I believe that each of us has a different history of home and *querencia*, and that one can make *querencia* where ever one lives. Quoting from Rudolfo Anaya's foreword *Querencia, Mi patria chica* in *Querencia: Reflections on the New Mexico Homeland* (Fonseca-Chavéz et. al., 2020)

*We live in a big country, but we also live in the smaller patria chica that contains the villages of the vicinity, los vecinos. Every village or town is a city-state, a patria chica. Love for our querencia spreads out to the larger country. Our love is strong because it has its center at home, in our casita, en los solares, our neighbors, the land, the river, and the llano.*

My *querencia* is in my home, my love—RJ Jones who is here with me today, my extended family—which includes my friends, colleagues, neighbors, my community, and my New Mexico Municipal League family, *mi patria chica*—Silver City, and Nuevo Mexico.

Last October, when I stepped into my role as President, I said that together we would create the future of the New Mexico Municipal League; we have, and continue to do so. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your President this past year, and my great fortune to serve with an outstanding and committed Executive Committee, League Board, and League staff. I feel especially blessed to have had the opportunity to work closely with two incredible and dedicated Executive Directors, Bill Fulginiti and AJ Forte.

A special thank you to my colleagues on the Town of Silver City Council and our town staff for their support of my service to this incredible organization, and to all of its members.

On October 1, one hundred and twenty-one years after the League was founded, we will once again have a Mayor of Raton leading the way. My colleague, Mayor Neil Segotta, from the great City of Raton, will take on the mantle of President. I know, without a shadow of doubt, that under his dedicated leadership and with the assistance of the Executive Committee, the League Board, our Executive Director and staff, and all of you that the future of the League is bright.

As always, I thank you each of you for your service to your communities and to the League.

Thank you all for your friendship.