

Las Vegas, New Mexico:
A Community that Provides Significant State Services
By Senator Pete Campos

Las Vegas has a long and proud tradition of providing important government services to the residents of the entire state. This uniquely Las Vegas tradition benefits not only New Mexico, but also the residents of Las Vegas.

The services have included providing behavioral health care to those most in need; educating students of all ages; coordinating law enforcement and transportation needs for the region; and providing numerous support services for low-income families.

The community, in turn, depends on federal and state funds for a large portion of its revenues. Unlike other communities with a population around 15,000, Las Vegas is known as a government center and its tax base depends on state and federal sources.

The community of Las Vegas also serves as a regional hub for governmental employment. Many qualified government employees come from much smaller communities like Anton Chico, Mora, Sapello, Tecolote and Watrous.

Ultimately, the community depends on the state budget to provide annual funds for employee compensation and operational programs. Las Vegas also depends on capital outlay allocations to maintain, make code-compliant, upgrade, expand and equip its state public facilities.

For example, the state has needs to replace badly corroded infrastructure at New Mexico Highlands University and to build a new long-term care facility. Capital outlay appropriations from the New Mexico Legislature will help make those improvements possible.

Providing statewide services has been multigenerational. In other words, generation after generation in many families have proudly become social workers, teachers, office personnel, caseworkers and program leaders. This has led Las Vegas to a century of serving a statewide constituency, something few other communities have achieved.

It is our responsibility in the legislature to further advocate for and find solutions to the growing program and facility needs in the Las Vegas area. It is not only maintaining,

but also keeping pace with, changing program requirements and facility code-compliant matters that face us daily.

We have done our best to keep current our government facilities and programs, but needs continue to surface. State funds do not seem to be enough to meet all the needs, so we must further unify, plan and make an effort to educate others who can assist us that our public facilities need further attention and persuade them to support our cause.

As I have always done, I will continue to seek the most effective way to secure resources to improve the Las Vegas facilities that serve a significant statewide population.