

**Border Trade a Bright Spot in New Mexico's Economy;
We Must Resist Protectionist Policies
By Senator Pete Campos**

New Mexico has taken advantage of its unique physical and cultural ties to Mexico, expanding trade and enjoying a border boom, but we must redouble our efforts in the face of threatened protectionist policies from Washington, D.C.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), entered into between the United States, Canada and Mexico in the mid-1990s, has been both praised and cursed by United States policymakers. New Mexico, like many other states, lost manufacturing jobs after NAFTA was enacted, but we have since adapted and taken advantage of the opportunity it presents.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in private investments have been made along our border with Mexico; industrial jobs at Santa Teresa over the last 30 years have grown from fewer than 500 to more than 4,250; and New Mexico's exports to Mexico have grown almost 350 percent since 2007, far faster than exports from our neighboring states.

NAFTA ensures that Canada, the United States and Mexico are able to trade with each other unhampered by high tariffs, sharing in the production of everything from agricultural products to flat-screen televisions. NAFTA eases the ability of business travelers to move among the three North American countries, establishes procedures to resolve trade disputes and has increased the competitiveness of all three countries worldwide.

In short, NAFTA is good for New Mexico.

We've done our part in New Mexico to support NAFTA, improving U.S. 54 from Alamogordo to Santa Rosa to make the highway safer for large trucks to transport goods to and from Mexico, supporting development in Santa Teresa and building and maintaining good relationships with our business and governmental counterparts in Mexican states, especially Chihuahua.

Our proximity to and good relationship with Chihuahua has also benefited New Mexico. Chihuahua is Mexico's largest exporter, shipping about \$45 billion worth of goods over the border, and it is home to one of the largest manufacturing sectors in Mexico.

We must be prepared to continue to support NAFTA as it and all trade agreements are threatened by policymakers in Washington, D.C. Motivated by a stated desire to bring more and higher-paying jobs back to the United States, particularly the manufacturing states other than

New Mexico, national policymakers through both their words and actions threaten to hurt our trade and cultural relationship with Mexico. This threat comes at a particularly bad time for New Mexico, as our border development and trade with Mexico is among the few bright spots in an otherwise struggling economy.

If we are truly going to diversify New Mexico's economy, which is key to ensuring that our children and grandchildren have bright futures, we must build upon our strengths. Free trade with Mexico is one of those strengths.