

Creative and Resilient Thinking

By Senator Pete Campos

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought heartache and pain to all. In New Mexico alone, cases of COVID-19 have exceeded 6,000, with nearly 300 fatalities and close to 2,000 cases officially designated as recovered. The state is short nearly \$2 billion in next fiscal year's budget. Thousands of New Mexicans are unemployed or working without necessary personal protective equipment. Unemployment, isolation, extreme work environments, illness and death have created a sense of uncertainty and surreality. But New Mexicans are resilient. We have the mental strength and resourcefulness to both weather this storm and learn from it.

Now is the time for creative and aspirational thinking. We have seen society's problems in a new light, and we now have new goals for our future. By using our combined mental strength, creativity and resilience, we can make a better future. Innovative ideas will revitalize our budget, stimulate our economy and strengthen our communities, both fiscally and physically. For example, here in Las Vegas and San Miguel County, we, with the support of Governor Lujan Grisham, have developed the 100% Community initiative using techniques developed by Katherine Ortega Courtney, Ph.D., and Dominic Capello, co-directors of the Anna, Age Eight Institute.

The 100% Community initiative outlines 10 vital services that ensure a vibrant community. This initiative provides a template to test and strengthen essential aspects of our society, such as health care, housing and education. While community leaders began work on the initiative before the onset of COVID-19, creative and resilient thinking has allowed the program to meet current community needs. Strategies to inform and protect the public have been implemented and are slowing the spread of COVID-19. The 100% Community model is working in San Miguel County, and we are not alone in our methodology. Bernalillo and Doña Ana counties are actively developing 100% Community programs of their own with the help of Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino and Senator William P. Soules, and many other communities are expected to follow suit.

Other examples of creative and resilient thinking can be seen statewide. Restaurants and other businesses have developed curbside pickup, established appointment systems for customers to browse merchandise and expanded online services. Artists and musicians have used isolation as a time to think and create new pieces. Families, schools and churches have explored new, virtual ways to stay in touch and support each other through these difficult times. And, of course, our thanks go to the essential workers who put themselves at risk every day; they are the ultimate example of resilience.

As the New Mexico Legislature prepares for a special session, creative and resilient thinking such as that found in San Miguel County and statewide can be used to address problems both new and old. We must develop soft landings for those impacted by COVID-19 and find ways to provide essential services. It is our responsibility to provide a reasonable budget that

supports essential services and inspires hope to our constituents. While not all ideas are feasible or appropriate, bipartisan development of seemingly impossible ideas can create evidence-based and aspirational solutions. We must develop new policies to remedy our recurring revenue shortfalls and adapt old policies to meet present-day situations. However, premature partisan criticism will dampen creativity and hurt our future. Let us be thoughtful, mature and informed citizens as we adapt local traditions and cultures to the challenges of recovery.

We are in this together. In San Miguel County and throughout the state, there are experienced, strong and creative individuals who can improve our communities, if we let them. When we work together, we can and will find solutions to our state's problems. We are resilient, and we will overcome. Reach out to your elected officials about problems and solutions. Respond to the census. Request your mail-in ballot. Vote for responsible, creative leaders who can forge a pathway to a new future. Listen to medical experts and community leaders. Replace fear with hope and optimism. Stay home, stay strong and stay healthy.