

Marsella Duarte, Candidate for State Representative, HD-16

Why are you seeking office?

I was born and raised in House District 16, I care deeply about the quality of life for future generations

Beyond being a customer, please describe your engagement with your local business community. I make it a point to know the business owners and staff and listen to thoughts and concerns affecting their establishment. I have attended several events including a business town hall with APD.

What is the biggest issue impacting “Quality of Life” and “Quality of Place” on Albuquerque’s Westside? In Albuquerque, like in many cities, the biggest issues impacting quality of life and quality of place can vary, however, I believe common challenges for the westside include:

1. **Crime Rates**: Albuquerque has had issues with crime rates, particularly property crime and violent crime, which can affect residents' sense of safety and overall quality of life.
2. **Education**: The quality of the education system can significantly impact families and individuals. Improving education opportunities and outcomes can enhance quality of life and the city's overall appeal.
3. **Economic Opportunities**: Availability of good jobs and economic stability contribute to quality of life. Areas with higher unemployment rates or fewer job prospects can struggle with maintaining a good quality of life.
4. **Public Infrastructure**: Issues with transportation, public transit, roads, bike paths, parks and utilities can affect how residents experience their city.
5. **Homelessness and Poverty**: Addressing homelessness and poverty can have a positive impact on the overall quality of life and community well-being.
6. **Healthcare Access**: Access to quality healthcare services is critical for the well-being of residents. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies and community involvement to improve the overall quality of life and the attractiveness of Albuquerque as a place to live, work, and visit.

What priorities do you see as being necessary to stimulate the state’s economy, grow jobs on the Westside, and make New Mexico a place where businesses want to locate?

To stimulate New Mexico's economy, grow jobs, and make the state attractive to businesses, several key priorities should be considered:

1. **Investment in Infrastructure**: Improving transportation networks, expanding broadband access, and upgrading utilities can make New Mexico more attractive for businesses and support economic development.
2. **Workforce Development**: Investing in education and training programs that align with industry needs can create a skilled workforce, making the state more appealing for businesses seeking talent.
3. **Support for Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship**: Providing incentives, access to capital, and streamlined regulatory processes can encourage small business growth and innovation.
4. **Diversification of Industries**: Promoting sectors beyond traditional industries like oil and gas, such as renewable energy, technology, and healthcare, can create a more resilient and dynamic economy.
5. **Tax Incentives and Business-Friendly Policies**: Implementing tax policies that encourage business investment and job creation, along with regulatory reforms that reduce burdens on businesses, can attract companies to New Mexico.
6. **Quality of Life**: Enhancing amenities like healthcare, housing, and cultural attractions can make New Mexico a desirable place for workers and their families to live and settle.
7. **Collaboration with Universities and Research Institutions**: Fostering partnerships between businesses and academic institutions can drive innovation, technology transfer, and workforce development.
8. **Promotion of Tourism**: Leveraging the state's natural beauty and cultural heritage through tourism can generate revenue and support local businesses.

By focusing on these priorities, New Mexico can build a more vibrant economy that attracts businesses, spurs job creation, and improves overall prosperity for its residents.

Public education is critical to our future workforce. In New Mexico the state entirely pays for Public Education, and it is typically the largest portion of the State's budget, what is the primary revenue source of our state's budget and, how would you ensure the continuation of this funding stream?

Oil and Gas.

Over the past two legislative sessions one of the most controversial bills for small business has been Paid Family Medical Leave, do you support the legislation proposed? If yes, how should it be paid for to ensure it is sustainable?

Yes I believe New Mexico should have PFML. After speaking with business owners in HD 16 I don't believe the bill (SB 3) was something the small businesses could sustain. Many businesses are struggling finding workers. There needs to be a case study to make sure the small businesses are going to be sustainable. Also the bill in it's final form would have a major impact on rural areas of New Mexico. We need to be more open to input from our small businesses to make it a win for everyone.

The Governor announced a special session focused on public safety. What are your top public safety priorities?

My top priorities are:

1. **Crime Prevention and Reduction**: Addressing violent crime, property crime, and community safety through effective policing, neighborhood watch programs, and crime prevention initiatives.
2. **Traffic Safety and Accident Prevention**: Implementing measures to reduce traffic accidents, pedestrian safety, and enforcement of traffic laws.
3. **Substance Abuse and Addiction**: Combating drug abuse and addiction through prevention, treatment programs, and community education.
4. **Youth and Gang Violence Prevention**: Providing opportunities and resources for at-risk youth, intervention programs, and community outreach to reduce gang-related violence.