

## **An Open Letter To the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce**

Terri Cole, President/CEO GACC  
Paul Sowards, Bank of Albuquerque  
Don Chalmers, Don Chalmers Ford  
Lonnie Talbert, Summitt Electric Supply  
Rick Alvidrez, Miller Stratvert  
Del Archuleta, Molzen-Corbin & Associates  
Norm Becker, Manuel Lujan Insurance Inc.  
Mike Burgess, KOB-TV  
Frank Chavez, Pueblo of Sandia  
Del Esparza, Esparza Advertising

Sherman McCorkle, Technology Ventures  
Cindy McGill, Public Service Company of NM (PNM)  
Tom Morton, Albuquerque Convention Center  
Cynthia Reinhart, KPMG, LLP  
Ron Stern, Lovelace Health System  
Cheryl Willman UNM Cancer Research Center  
Greg Winegardner, Wells Fargo Bank NM  
Michael Zientek, Gap Inc.  
Eloise Gift, Keller Williams Realty

Dear Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors:

It is of great concern that the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce (GACC) consistently takes positions on legislation and public policy issues contrary to the interests of New Mexico businesses and in direct opposition to the welfare of small businesses in the state. GACC's latest position advocating for the inclusion of employer sanctions in the "HealthSOLUTIONS" bill is unfathomable.

"HealthSOLUTIONS" places an impossible burden on New Mexico's small businesses. The bill mandates employers pay an annual penalty or tax to the state of up to \$500 for each full-time employee and up to \$250 for every part-time employee. The definition of employee includes those working only 90 days a year, and "full-time" is defined as working as few as 20 hours a week! Unbelievably, the bill would expand this tax by 2011 to *all* businesses, no matter how small – even one or two employees.

Under the GACC supported "HealthSOLUTIONS" proposal, small businesses would be penalized for creating more jobs. New Mexico's small businesses often have narrow profit margins that can't absorb a \$500 per employee tax on job creation. We should be doing exactly the opposite – creating subsidies for small businesses that can't afford to both create jobs and offer health insurance.

Small businesses are the very strength of New Mexico's economy. The proposed "HealthSOLUTIONS" tax would be economically crippling to labor-intensive businesses, including small manufacturers, restaurants, hotels, family farms, and retailers. By supporting this poorly designed legislation GACC is clearly advocating punishing and penalizing the small business engine which creates vitally important new jobs in New Mexico.

The big businesses represented on the GACC board can afford to pay health insurance premiums to their employees and most probably do. Unfortunately, many of these big businesses are also laying off workers at alarming rates.

We do not believe that a small group of 18 individuals representing big business interests, heavily state regulated industries, and a few chosen suppliers have the right to speak for the entire business community. We resent and reject your ongoing claims to the public and legislators that you are the “voice of business”, especially small businesses which you clearly do not represent. You should be aware that GACC is the only business group in favor of this healthcare proposal. Several other business organizations have formed an employers’ coalition to strongly oppose the “HealthSOLUTIONS” legislation. These groups include:

Association of Commerce and Industry  
Associated Builders and Contractors  
Dairy Farmers of America  
Dairy Producers of New Mexico  
Independent Petroleum Association of New Mexico  
National Federation of Independent Business  
New Mexico Farm and Ranch Bureau  
New Mexico Grocers Association  
New Mexico Ground Water Association  
New Mexico Petroleum Marketers Association  
New Mexico Restaurant Association

Your position on healthcare is yet another example of a long history of questionable policy making by the GACC. Your recent support of an increase in the minimum wage at the state level is another. The fact that you have yet again taken a politically expedient position, contrary to developing a vibrant private business climate in New Mexico, is no longer surprising. However, this year you miscalculated if you thought that we were going to sit quietly on the sidelines while you misrepresent the impacts of the proposed healthcare legislation on small businesses of New Mexico. In light of the severe impacts to small businesses and citizens of the state, we urge GACC to reconsider your position on healthcare legislation.