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## Dreamers Need Solutions

*Dreamers Necesitan Soluciones*

8

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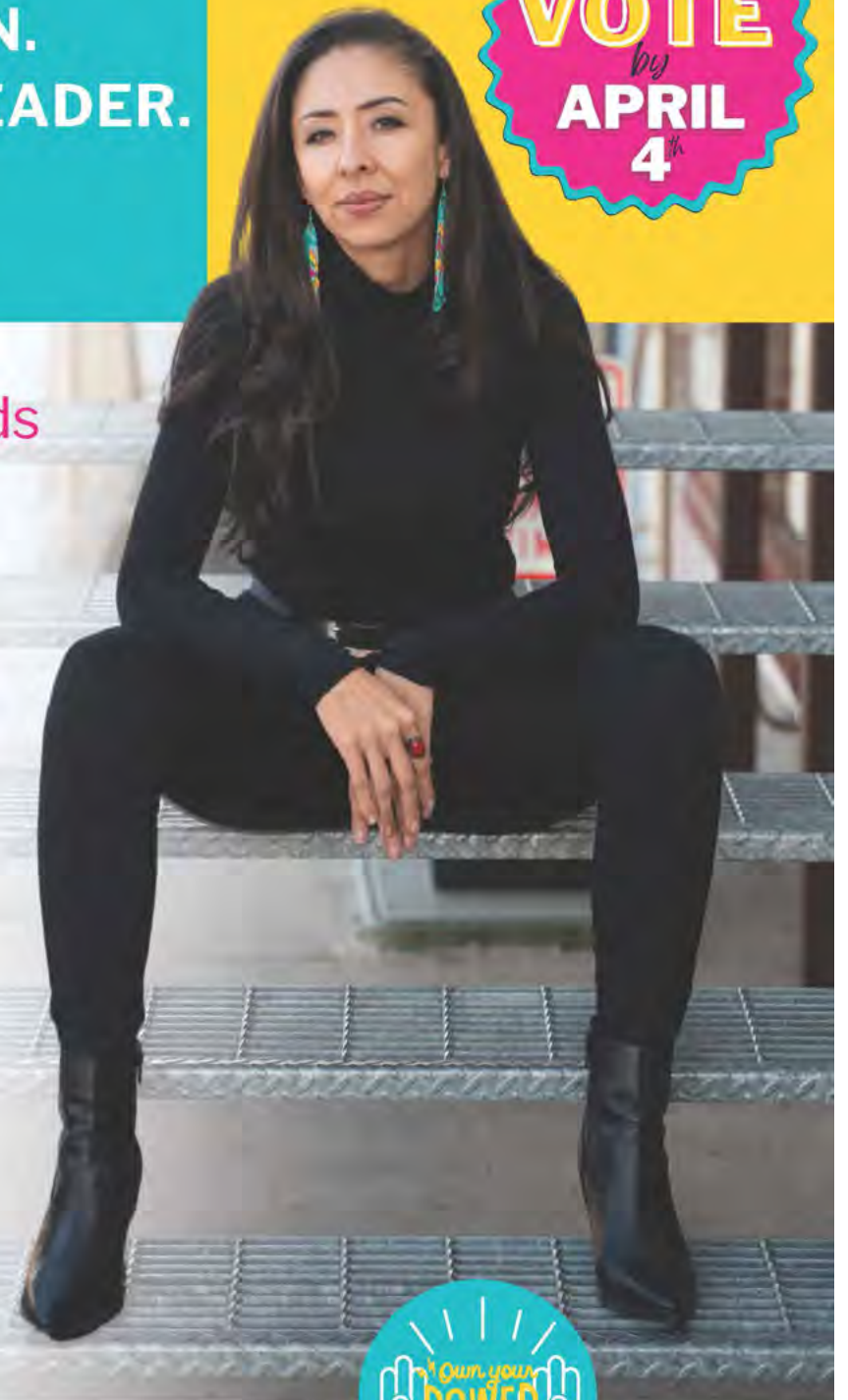
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# The Anti-Democracy That Is Anti-Immigrant Extremism

Maribel Hastings and David Torres

In another week of contrasts, two issues—the *New York Times* story about child labor exploitation, and the criticism about President Joe Biden’s announcement of a new asylum restriction—are a sad reminder of the failure of the political class to approve broad-scale immigration reform.

In its place, Republicans—who now control the House of Representatives—opt for dedicating time to hearings that only promote conspiracy theories of white nationalists, who live in a separate reality with anachronistic ideas

that are not adjusted to the United States that exists today.

In a sense, the nearness of the next presidential elections in 2024 has made the Republicans accelerate the pace of their tired, old anti-immigrant and racist strategy in order to gain ground with their base, without caring that their political venom shows they do not want to solve a problem, but rather continuing exploiting it for political ends.

On the other hand, the Democrats continue without overcoming a mistake they repeat each time they confront complicated immigration topics. They usually yield to Republican pressure with the belief that they can silence

their critics, when in reality the Republican attacks only increase. That is, on the issue of asylum, instead of fearing Republican rants about the anticipated increase in border crossings with the end of Title 42, the administration and Democratic legislators should show that this country is capable of handling the situation, as it has the resources and capacity to do so.

Instead, they opt to restrict asylum even more. And although the White House would like to justify its actions, it becomes even more difficult to defend their positions. Recall one Bill Clinton in the ‘90s, signing into law measures that even affected documented immigrants; or one Barack Obama, increasing deportations to try to attract “Republican support” for comprehensive immigration reform, something that clearly never happened.

But instead of continuing to try to placate a Republican Party that, on immigration matters, will never act in good faith, Democrats should listen to the demands of those who have supported them, election after election, despite the circumstances. We are referring to those huge immigration powers



that keep the country strong, economically and demographically speaking but who, through their vulnerability, become the bait for promises, on the one hand, and anti-immigrant attacks on the other. Who do they turn to, then?

“

*Democrats should listen to the demands of those who have supported them, election after election, despite the circumstances.*

Every time the House Republicans convene a hearing to talk about the situation at the border, they do so by giving

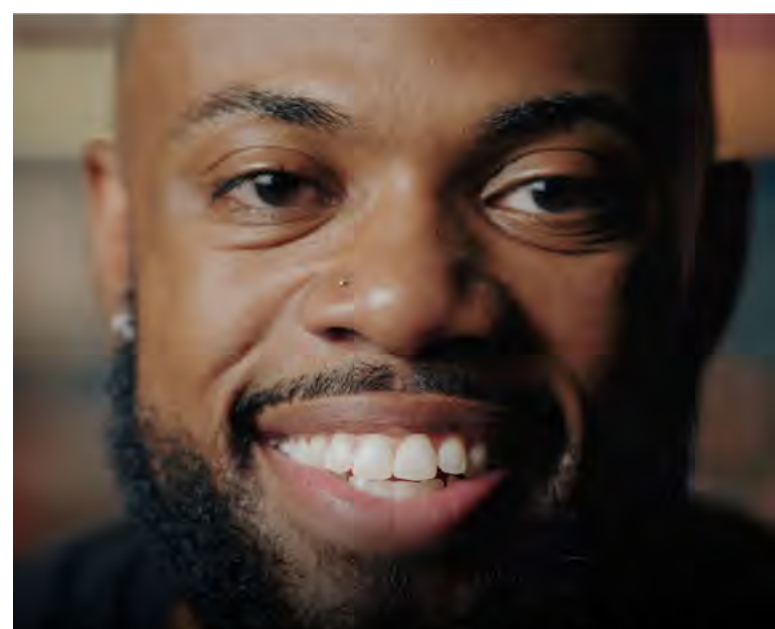


a platform to individuals who defend conspiracy theories of white nationalists who just repeat lies, like that the fentanyl crisis is the responsibility of immigrants, when this has been proven false.

According to the Cato Institute, 86% of the people convicted for fentanyl trafficking in 2021 were U.S. citizens, ten times more than the convictions of undocumented people. Moreover, 90% of fentanyl confiscations occur at ports of entry or vehicle inspection points inside the country, not along the routes that undocumented people cross.

These data, however, don’t prevent Republicans from continuing to vilify immigrants using the fentanyl crisis. And that shows how perverse their

See Hastings & Torres on page 16



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## La Antidemocracia del Extremismo Antiinmigrante

Maribel Hastings y David Torres

En otra semana de contrastes, dos asuntos —la historia de *The New York Times* sobre explotación laboral infantil y las críticas que ha generado el anuncio del presidente Joe Biden de restringir el asilo— son el triste recordatorio del fracaso de la clase política en aprobar una reforma migratoria amplia.

En su lugar, los republicanos que ahora controlan la Cámara de Representantes optan por dedicar tiempo a audiencias que solamente promueven teorías conspirativas de nacionalistas blancos, que viven una realidad aparte con ideas anacrónicas que no se ajustan ya al Estados Unidos de hoy.

En ese sentido, la cercanía de las próximas elecciones presidenciales de 2024 ha hecho que los republicanos aceleren el paso recurriendo a su gastada estrategia antiinmigrante y racista para ir ganando terreno entre su base, sin importar que su veneno político signifique que no quieren solucionar un problema, sino que prefieren seguir explotándolo para fines politiqueros.

Pero por otra parte, los demócratas siguen sin superar un mal que repiten cada vez que enfrentan temas migratorios complicados: suelen ceder a presiones republicanas con la creencia de que pueden acallar sus críticas, cuando en realidad esos ataques republicanos

se incrementan. Es decir, en el tema del asilo en lugar de temer a los ataques republicanos al anticipado incremento de cruces fronterizos con el fin del Título 42, la administración y los legisladores demócratas deberían demostrar que este país es capaz de atender esta situación, pues cuenta con los recursos y la capacidad para ello.

“

*Los demócratas deberían escuchar los reclamos de quienes elección tras elección los han apoyado, a pesar de las circunstancias.*

Pero en su lugar optan por restringir más el asilo; y aunque la Casa Blanca quiera justificar su acción, resulta cada vez más difícil defender sus posturas. Recuerdan a un Bill Clinton en los años noventa convirtiendo en ley medidas que incluso afectaron a inmigrantes con documentos; o a un Barack Obama aumentando las deportaciones para tratar de atraer “apoyo republicano” a una reforma migratoria amplia, algo que, claro está, nunca ocurrió.

De manera que en lugar de seguir tratando de complacer a un Partido Republicano que en materia migratoria nunca actuará de buena fe, los demócratas deberían escuchar los reclamos de

quienes elección tras elección los han apoyado, a pesar de las circunstancias. Nos referimos a esas grandes fuerzas migratorias que mantienen la fortaleza del país, económica y demográficamente hablando, y que siempre viven con la esperanza de regularizar su situación migratoria, pero que su vulnerabilidad los convierte lo mismo en carnada de promesas, por una parte, y de ataques antiinmigrantes, por otra. ¿En quién refugiarse, entonces?

Cada vez que los republicanos de la Cámara Baja convocan a una audiencia para abordar la situación en la frontera, lo hacen dando plataforma a individuos que defienden teorías conspirativas de nacionalistas blancos que solo repiten mentiras, como que la crisis del fentanilo es responsabilidad de los inmigrantes, cuando se ha probado que no es así.

Según el Instituto CATO, 86% de los condenados en 2021 por tráfico de fentanilo fueron ciudadanos estadounidenses, diez veces mayor que las condenas de indocumentados. Asimismo, 90% de las confiscaciones de fentanilo ocurren en puertos de entrada legales o centros de inspección vehicular al interior del país y no en las rutas de cruces de indocumentados.

Estos datos, no obstante, no impiden que los republicanos sigan vinculando a los inmigrantes con la crisis

Vea Hastings y Torres, página 16

# Child Labor Investigation Reveals Immigration Policy Changes We Need Now

Naureen Shah

Children across the nation are working in dangerous, sometimes lethal jobs in American factories, farms and mills — according to a *New York Times* [exposé](#) that has rattled corporate America, President Biden, and Congress.



“

*Why would some of the top names in American business look the other way as children are hired into jobs that are only suitable for adults?*

The kids, who are here without their parents, have fled countries rife with violence and poverty. Many are [seeking asylum](#) and other protections under the law. But in the meantime, they are laboring in the shadows — in [physically demanding jobs](#) that employers often have trouble filling. These children are helping to put food on our tables and

clothes on our backs — sometimes suffering serious injuries as a result. The moral implications are chilling.

The Biden administration responded [swiftly](#), promising an inter-agency task force that will rightly focus on the direct problem of failed child labor protections. But this moment also calls for big policy solutions — without them, children and adults will remain vulnerable to exploitation, in ways that intersect profoundly with our daily lives.

## 1. We need an earned path to citizenship for immigrants.

Why would some of the top names in American business look the other way as children are hired into jobs that are only suitable for adults? One reason is the profound shortage of workers —

the nation has [over 10 million job openings](#) but only 5.7 million unemployed workers. Immigration restrictions are a strain on the American economy, as Labor Secretary Martin Walsh recently [explained](#). Despite bipartisan consensus on the importance of immigration to [fueling economic growth](#) and addressing the [labor shortage](#), Congress has struggled for [more than two decades](#) to pass sensible immigration reform. The issue remains mired in ugly, xenophobic rhetoric.

See [Shah](#) on page 16

# Congress Needs to Finally Pass the Dream Act

José Patino

When I received DACA protections a decade ago, at age 24, I immediately burst into tears. I'd recently graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in mechanical engineering, but I wasn't allowed to hold a legal job or even live legally in the United States. Now I could get a social security number. That changed everything for me — and for more than [23,000 young adult immigrants in Arizona](#).

Though I'd lived in Phoenix since moving here from Mexico at age six and graduated from Carl Hayden High School, I'd never felt truly safe. This was especially true in the months lead-



ing up to DACA. Joseph Arpaio, then Maricopa County Sheriff, had been on an anti-immigrant crusade — pulling over anyone who looked Hispanic and checking their papers. I was terrified of getting deported simply driving to and from my construction job. DACA allowed me to move forward without

fear. I could find my calling and a place in my community.

“

*Like many of my peers with DACA, I'm approaching middle age — no longer a teen or young adult.*

But that security didn't last. In 2017, the Trump Administration tried to shutter DACA, arguing that it was illegal. Today the program is suspended and held up in a [long court battle](#).

See [Patino](#) on page 21

# Restoration of Voting Rights is Critical

Randy Pruitt

Many who have been formerly incarcerated, including myself, agree that connection to our community is our most critical lifeline when reintegrating into society after the completion of a prison sentence.

We are thrust into society and are told to find a job, a place to live, and support ourselves financially, while all these processes present monumental challenges and barriers.

Feeling connected to community can make a significant difference in the

reintegration process, and can help decrease the likelihood of recidivism.

One of the many ways formerly incarcerated New Mexicans can connect to community after being released from prison is to vote. But many of us, including me, are unable to get our right to vote restored.

I have been denied the right to vote multiple times by the Curry County Clerk, even though I am eligible to vote.

Under current law, New Mexicans who have completed their prison sentence, and have completed their proba-

tion or parole are eligible to register and have their right to vote restored.

This also applies to those whose charges have been dismissed or cleared. My felony charges have been publicly dismissed.

Other charges I have from 2005 are so old that the probation department can't provide me with records to prove that I completed my probation and am eligible to vote.

I have applied three times to have my right to vote restored, and have been denied three times.

I don't understand what purpose not allowing me to vote serves, other than preventing me from voting against someone who has violated my rights or a lawmaker who impacts my life.

See [Pruitt](#) on page 19

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# Guns Are the Biggest Public Health Threat Kids Face. Why Aren't They Getting the Message?

Elisabeth Rosenthal

I still remember the raspy voice of the wizened cancer patient with the hole in her throat. So addicted to the poison that was killing her — cigarettes — she interspersed her words of warning about the dangers of smoking with taking puffs of a cigarette through her tracheostomy hole.

It was a short, disturbing public service video shown in my sixth-grade classroom as part of an anti-smoking campaign linked to a [U.S. surgeon general's report](#), which for the first time officially linked smoking to cancer and heart disease.

That night, I flushed my father's cigarettes down the toilet. The woman's image haunted my nightmares for years. After seeing that video, I never lighted up.



Today that kind of video would probably not make it into the classroom, deemed inappropriate for pre-teens, too triggering.

But that's arguably just the kind of aggressive messaging campaign — particularly aimed at young people — we need right now to combat what has become the country's No. 1 public health threat for American youth: guns.

Firearms became the leading cause of death among those 19 and younger in 2020, owing to a [dramatic spike in youth gun violence deaths](#) during the pandemic. The gun homicide rate in the U.S. for people ages 15-24 was already [49 times as high](#) as in other developed nations more than a decade ago. It's a racial justice issue, too. Black males 15 to 34 are [more than 20 times](#) as likely to be a victim of gun homicide as their white counterparts.

Though much of the media attention surrounds mass school shootings and the proliferation of semiautomatic weapons, [handguns were used in 59%](#) of murders and "non-negligent manslaughters." Most gun homicides involve the shooting of a small number of people, the "ones and twos."

Little national data is available on the age of the perpetrators of this day-

to-day violence, but there is evidence they are getting younger. Where I live, in Washington, D.C., 40% of suspects in shootings were 18 to 24 years old and 11% were under age 17, according to a [2021 report](#).

Dr. Babak Sarani, co-chief of trauma surgery at George Washington University Medical Center, tells of how [he'd treated one teenager four times since 2018 for gunshot wounds](#), until the young man died after being shot in November, at 19.

In response to rising gun violence, Congress last year [passed its first gun safety measure in decades](#) and more than [500 state gun safety measures](#) have passed in the past decade.

But the carnage continues, and laws alone are unlikely to stop it, with gun ownership protected in some form by the 2nd Amendment and a Supreme

Court that [takes a broad view](#) of what that means. The year 2020 saw the [largest number of gun sales in the nation's history](#). Our country is supersaturated with weapons.

Despite all that, one important lever remains oddly underutilized: using the media, social media, and the entertainment industry to rebrand guns from symbols of status, power, and personal freedom to ones of death and carnage.

Gun manufacturers, following the playbook of tobacco companies in the 1940s and 1950s, [have fostered a positive image](#) for deadly weapons among young Americans, particularly men. And they have had collaborators in the process — violent films, TV shows, and video games that glorify and glamorize weaponry.

See [Rosenthal](#) on page 16



César E. Chávez Peace and Justice Committee of Denver



## 22nd Annual Marcha & Celebration Reclaiming Male Responsibility through Nonviolence Saturday, April 1, 2023

8:30 AM Catholic Mass:

Regis University, Saint John Francis Chapel - 3333 Regis Boulevard, Denver, CO

10:00 AM Marcha Step Off:

Regis University to César E. Chávez Park - 4121 Tennyson Street, Denver, CO  
(46th at Lowell water station)

11:15 AM Park Opening Ceremony:

Program & Awards at César E. Chávez Park

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# Is a Pardon for Dreamers the Only Way to Protect Them?

By Pilar Marrero

With the prospect of a legislative solution for Dreamers – and the millions of undocumented immigrants in the country – as far off as ever, the California-Mexico Studies Center is raising anew the idea of a presidential pardon in its newsletter, “El Magonista.”

The idea is not new. In 2017, immigrant rights activists asked former President Obama to use his pardon authority in the days prior to then-President-elect Trump’s inauguration to protect undocumented immigrants or, at the very least, Dreamers.

Obama refused, and under Trump every effort was made to eliminate Obama’s signature DACA program, which offered temporary protection for those undocumented immigrants

who arrived in the US as children.

While courts at the time protected DACA, it’s now under siege again and will likely come before the Supreme Court for a third time. It has survived similar legal challenges twice before, but all bets are off with the current makeup of SCOTUS.

The editorial by El Magonista calls on President Biden to use his pardon for “Dreamers and other undocumented peoples living in the United States.”

“No other viable solutions have been suggested by any other immigration groups or elected officials – PERIOD,” the authors argue. “The time has come for Dreamers to stand up and demand President Biden issue a full pardon to all undocumented residents.”

It’s been 21 years since the first DREAM Act legislation was introduced in Congress. Dreamers have since become a powerful advocacy



Immigrant advocates recognize that “Dreamers are soldiers, nurses, teachers, friends, neighbors and the future of our nation.” / Defensores de los inmigrantes reconocen que “los Dreamers son soldados, enfermeras, maestros, amigos, vecinos y el futuro de nuestra nación.”

voice within the US immigration policy arena.

But some activists contend that a pardon will not regularize Dreamers’ status. They also question the legal

force such a pardon would carry given that under current law being undocumented is a civil violation rather than an actual crime.

But there is a growing sense of desperation within the immigrant rights movement because, as El Magonista notes, “no one else has suggested anything but hollow, band-aid efforts to finally relieve the 11 million undocumented immigrants living, working and paying taxes in the U.S. right now.”

From day one the Biden administration promised comprehensive immigration reform, including protection for Dreamers. And while it has reversed many Trump-era administrative rules and regulations, it has since hardened its position on asylum and border issues in response to growing political pressure from the right coupled with the continued arrival of migrants from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, among others.

Recently, the administration proposed a new rule on asylum requiring non-Mexican petitioners to first seek asylum in one of the countries they pass through before entering the US. The move united the typically fragmented immigrant rights movement in opposition to what they are calling the “Trump Ban 2”

While clearly designed to deflect conservative criticism of Biden as an

“open border President,” the fact is that restrictionism has never been a winning strategy for Democrats, either in protecting them from Republican at-

“

*It’s been 21 years since the first DREAM Act legislation was introduced in Congress.*

tacks on immigration or in winning votes from erstwhile supporters.

Obama is a perfect case in point. He deported more immigrants than almost any prior president, a fact that won him few if any Republican allies. He also created DACA, protecting some 600,000 Dreamers from deportation.

A decade later, even that protection now appears to be faltering, leaving the country – and millions of undocumented immigrants – mired in continued immigration policy paralysis.

Pilar Marrero, Associate Editor, *Ethnic Media Services*. Reproduced with permission by Ethnic Media Services.

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It’s been 21 years since the first DREAM Act legislation was introduced in Congress, “Protect DACA, Protect immigrants by any means necessary,” say activists. / Han pasado 21 años desde que la primera legislación DREAM Act fue introducida en el Congreso, “Proteger DACA, Proteger a los inmigrantes por cualquier medio necesario,” dicen los activistas.

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# ¿Es el Indulto Presidencial a los Dreamers la Única Forma de Protegerlos?

By Pilar Marrero

Cuando las perspectivas de cualquier solución legislativa para los Dreamers, por no hablar de otros inmigrantes indocumentados, parecen más improbables que nunca, el Centro de Estudios California-México vuelve a sacar la idea de un indulto presidencial en su boletín “El Magonista”.

“

*Han pasado 21 años desde que se presentó en el Congreso la primera legislación DREAM Act para regularizar la situación de los jóvenes traídos a Estados Unidos cuando eran niños.*

Esta idea ya se ha debatido antes. Algunos activistas pidieron al expresidente Obama que usara su autoridad de indulto presidencial justo antes de que el entonces presidente electo Trump tomara posesión a principios de 2017

para proteger a los inmigrantes indocumentados y, como mínimo, a los Dreamers, protegidos y desprotegidos por el programa DACA de Obama.

No lo hizo, y Trump intentó por todos los medios eliminar DACA, el asilo y a los inmigrantes. Los tribunales protegieron DACA, pero está bajo asedio de nuevo, y su legalidad probablemente irá a la Corte Suprema por tercera vez. Ha sobrevivido dos veces antes, pero es difícil imaginar que lo haga una tercera vez con la composición actual del SCOTUS.

El editorial de El Magonista aboga por que el presidente Biden utilice su indulto para “los Dreamers y otros indocumentados que viven en Estados Unidos.”

“Ninguna otra solución viable ha sido sugerida por otros grupos de inmigración o funcionarios electos – PERIODO”, argumenta el artículo. “Ha llegado el momento de que los Dreamers se pongan de pie y exijan al presidente Biden que emita un perdón completo a todos los residentes indocumentados.”

Han pasado 21 años desde que se presentó en el Congreso la primera legislación DREAM Act para regularizar

la situación de los jóvenes traídos a Estados Unidos cuando eran niños. Desde entonces, los Dreamers se han convertido en una poderosa fuerza de defensa en el ámbito de la política de inmigración de Estados Unidos.

Algunos activistas indican que un indulto no regularizará el estatus de nadie, y no está claro cuál será la fuerza legal de dicho indulto, teniendo en cuenta que estar en el país como indocumentado es, en el mejor de los casos, una violación civil de las leyes y no un delito.

Pero las cosas se están poniendo desesperadas en el movimiento por los derechos de los inmigrantes porque, como indica “El Magonista”, “nadie ha sugerido nada más que esfuerzos huecos y curitis para aliviar de una vez a los 11 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que viven, trabajan y pagan impuestos en Estados Unidos ahora mismo.”

El Gobierno de Biden empezó protegiendo a los Dreamers, cambiando muchas normas y regulaciones administrativas de la era Trump y proponiendo una reforma migratoria integral desde el primer día. Pero desde entonces



Photo/Foto: Molly Adams/flickr/cc

Activistas siguen presionando por una reforma de la inmigración humana y exigen que “ningún ser humano sea ilegal”. / Activists continue to push for human immigration reform and demand that “No human being is illegal”.



Photo/Foto: Molly Adams/flickr/cc

Se necesita una legislación inmediata para la ciudadanía para los beneficiarios de DACA y los inmigrantes, “Basta”, dicen los defensores de los inmigrantes. / Immediate legislation for citizenship is needed for DACA recipients and immigrants, “Enough,” say immigrant advocates.

es ha endurecido su postura en materia de asilo y fronteras por la presión política de los republicanos restriccionistas y la llegada de posibles solicitantes de asilo de Venezuela, Nicaragua y Cuba, entre otros.

Recientemente, el gobierno de Biden propuso una nueva norma sobre asilo que unió al movimiento por los derechos de los inmigrantes, típicamente fragmentado, en contra de la medida, a la que llamaron la “prohibición de Trump2”. Parece un movimiento político para proteger a Biden del apelativo de “presidente de fronteras abiertas” que tanto gusta a los republicanos. Pero el restriccionismo nunca protegió a los demócratas de los ataques políticos republicanos contra la inmigración.

Obama hizo más que ningún otro presidente demócrata para deportar inmigrantes y mantenerlos fuera del país, un esfuerzo nunca reconocido por su oposición. Pero también creó DACA, un estatus temporal que protege a unos 600.000 Dreamers, y que ahora cumple diez años.

Este país ha alcanzado ya más de tres décadas de parálisis en política migratoria.

Pilar Marrero, editora asociada, Ethnic Media Services. Reproducido con permiso de Ethnic Media Services.

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# Debbie Ortega's Vast Experience Make Her a Prime Candidate for Mayor of Denver

## COLORADO

By Benjamin Neufeld

Coming up on the end of her term as an at-large member of Denver City Council after a long career as a local public servant and legislator, becoming Denver's next mayor would certainly be a climactic finale to Debbie Ortega's life in politics. However, Ortega did not decide to launch her mayoral campaign to fulfill any kind of personal ambition. Following a busy 40-year career, and with multiple grandchildren living in Denver, making the decision to run was not easy.

"I was really not looking at doing this," said Ortega. "I was looking at retiring at the end of my term as a council person, because I have enough years with the city that I can retire and collect a pension."

What the decision came down to, she said, was a feeling of continued obligation.

"I grew up here. I care about this city and really am concerned about where we're at today," says Ortega. "I believe that, now more than ever, this

city needs someone who understands how this city works. There's some good people running, but we're going to have to go through a learning curve for any of them, and I don't think this city has the time to just sit back and wait for somebody to learn how to do the job to try to fix some of these problems."

“

*"I believe that, now more than ever, this city needs someone who understands how this city works."*  
Debbie Ortega, Denver Mayoral Candidate

Ortega moved to Denver from New Mexico when she was 13. She and her five siblings were raised by her single mother after her father, a coal miner, was killed on the job. She graduated from West High School. She attended Barnes Business College and attended DU's Law School Clinical Education Program. She has worked for Lt. Gov. George Brown's office and for U.S. Sen. Floyd Haskell, and she has done exten-

sive work for non-profits and activist organizations.

She represented Denver's District 9 on City Council from 1987 until 2003, after spending many years as an aide to the district's former Councilman, Sal Carpio. In 2011, she was elected to an at-large seat on the City Council. She was then reelected in 2015 and again in 2019 in a landslide victory—receiving 23,000 more votes than the incumbent mayor.

Throughout her time as a legislator on City Council, Ortega says that she has identified Denver's most pressing issues, and she has identified solutions for these issues; but, when it comes to enacting these solutions, her power as a legislator simply cannot compete with the power of the mayor's office.

"The administration in this city has one of the strongest 'strong-mayor-weak-council' forms of government," says Ortega. "The mayor controls the purse strings as well as the cabinet members, and if you have a cabinet member that just isn't going to work with you, it's hard to get things done." As mayor, Ortega says she would quickly and efficiently advance legislation which addresses pressing issues



Photo/Foto: Debbie Ortega for Mayor

Denver Mayoral candidate Debbie Ortega has a proven track record of responsible and effective legislation. / La candidata a la alcaldía de Denver, Debbie Ortega, tiene un historial probado de legislación responsable y eficaz.

which Denver cannot wait any longer to see fixed.

"We're working right now trying to address railroad safety, and this is something I've been working on since 2014," said Ortega. Denver, she says, cannot risk waiting any longer for disaster mitigating safety regulations--referencing the recent ecological disaster which took place in East Palestine, Ohio.

Denver has multiple freight lines which cut directly through the center of the city--in direct proximity to major pieces of infrastructure (including I-25, I-70, light rail, etc.) and residential development; Ortega says developers have been allowed to build up to just 18 feet away from the tracks. Meanwhile, individual train cars are 100 feet long. "You have a derailment, and you're 18 feet from the tracks, you know what's

going to happen with that train car—it's going to smash into your building."

According to Ortega, a derailment can create a pathway of destruction for miles along the train tracks. "If you're the engineer at the front of a train, you don't even know a train[car] has derailed way behind you because there are no sensors like they have in Europe, Japan, and other places."

Even more concerning, however, is the oil which could be in these derailed cars. Ortega says that when these freight lines were first developed, "we didn't have all this petroleum product coming through our city," meaning urbanization around these freight corridors was not a major concern. Considering the volume of petroleum and other flammable material now being shipped directly through dense urban development, Denver could be at risk of a disaster similar in caliber to East Palestine.

Ortega says she's heard from the fire chief in Pueblo, who she says has run trainings for derailment related incidents, that, "when you have one of those petroleum cars catch fire, that petroleum product burns so hot, it will burn the face off of a building and everything inside of it." In the case of multiple filled petroleum tanker cars in a sequence along a train, one explosion could lead to a chain reaction, therefore compounding the disaster.

Ortega, nor anyone else at the city level, has jurisdiction over the railroads themselves, so she has been working to pass an ordinance which would regulate land use and development within a certain distance from freight train corridors. She does not want to restrict development, she stresses, but she wants certain safety protocols to be required for development in those areas in order to mitigate the effects of a derailment. These protocols could include requiring apartment buildings position their parking garages toward the train tracks to create a larger buffer and/or requiring that developers create a berm between a building and the train track using the soil removed for the building's foundation.

Ortega wants these safety measures to be mandatory. "We've been saying since 2014, this is an issue we need to be looking at," she said. Ortega did work

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El Semanario



# La Amplia Experiencia de Debbie Ortega la Convierte en la Mejor Candidata a la Alcaldía

## COLORADO

Por Benjamin Neufeld

A punto de terminar su mandato como miembro del Consejo Municipal de Denver tras una larga carrera como funcionaria pública y legisladora local, convertirse en la próxima alcaldesa de Denver sería sin duda un colofón culminante para la vida política de Debbie Ortega. Sin embargo, Ortega no decidió lanzar su campaña a la alcaldía para satisfacer ningún tipo de ambición personal. Tras una ajetreada carrera de 40 años, y con varios nietos viviendo en Denver, tomar la decisión de presentarse no fue fácil.

“Realmente no pensaba hacer esto”, dijo Ortega. “Estaba pensando en jubilarme al final de mi mandato como concejal, porque tengo suficientes años en la ciudad como para poder jubilarme y cobrar una pensión”.

A lo que se redujo la decisión, dijo, fue a un sentimiento de obligación continuada.

“He crecido aquí. Me importa esta ciudad y realmente me preocupa la situación actual”, dice Ortega. “Creo que, ahora más que nunca, esta ciudad necesita a alguien que entienda cómo funciona esta ciudad. Hay algunas buenas personas que se presentan, pero vamos a tener que pasar por una curva de aprendizaje para cualquiera de ellos, y no creo que esta ciudad tenga tiempo para simplemente sentarse y esperar a que alguien aprenda a hacer el trabajo para tratar de solucionar algunos de estos problemas.”

Ortega se trasladó a Denver desde Nuevo México cuando tenía 13 años. Ella y sus cinco hermanos fueron criados por su madre soltera después de que su padre, minero del carbón, muriera en el trabajo. Se graduó en el West High School. Estudió en el Barnes Business College y asistió al Programa de Educación Clínica de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Washington. Ha trabajado para la oficina del vicegobernador George Brown y para el senador federal Floyd Haskell, y ha realizado una amplia labor para organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro y activistas.

Representó al distrito 9 de Denver en el Ayuntamiento desde 1987 hasta 2003, tras pasar muchos años como ayudante del anterior concejal del distrito, Sal Carpio. En 2011, fue elegida para ocupar un escaño en el Ayuntamiento. Luego fue reelegida en 2015 y de nuevo en 2019 en una victoria aplastante, recibiendo 23.000 votos más que el alcalde en funciones.

A lo largo de su tiempo como legisladora en el Concejo Municipal, Or-

tega dice que ha identificado los problemas más apremiantes de Denver, y ha identificado soluciones para estos problemas; pero, cuando se trata de promulgar estas soluciones, su poder como legisladora simplemente no puede competir con el poder de la oficina del alcalde.

“

*“Creo que, ahora más que nunca, esta ciudad necesita a alguien que entienda cómo funciona esta ciudad.”*  
*Debbie Ortega, Candidata a la Alcaldía de Denver*

“La administración de esta ciudad tiene una de las formas de gobierno más sólidas: alcalde fuerte-consejo débil”, afirma Ortega. “El alcalde controla los hilos de la economía, así como a los miembros del gabinete, y si tienes un miembro del gabinete que no va a trabajar contigo, es difícil hacer las cosas”. Como alcaldesa, Ortega afirma que impulsaría rápida y eficazmente la legislación que aborda problemas acuciantes que Denver no puede esperar más para ver solucionados.

“Estamos trabajando en este momento tratando de abordar la seguridad ferroviaria, y esto es algo en lo que he estado trabajando desde 2014”, dijo Ortega. Denver, dice, no puede arriesgarse a esperar más tiempo para que las regulaciones de seguridad mitiguen los desastres -en referencia al reciente desastre ecológico que tuvo lugar en East Palestine, Ohio-.

Denver tiene varias líneas de transporte de mercancías que atraviesan directamente el centro de la ciudad, muy cerca de grandes infraestructuras (como la I-25, la I-70, el metro ligero, etc.) y de zonas residenciales. Mientras tanto, los vagones de los trenes miden 30 metros. “Si se produce un descarrilamiento y estás a cinco metros de las vías, ya sabes lo que va a pasar con ese vagón: se va a estrellar contra tu edificio”.

Según Ortega, un descarrilamiento puede crear un camino de destrucción de kilómetros a lo largo de las vías del tren. “Si eres el maquinista que va delante del tren, ni siquiera sabes que un vagón ha descarrilado detrás de ti, porque no hay sensores como en Europa, Japón y otros lugares”.

Pero aún más preocupante es el petróleo que puede haber en esos vagones descarrilados. Según Ortega, cuando se construyeron estas líneas de mercancías, “no pasaban por nuestra ciudad todos estos productos petrolíferos”, lo que significa que la urbanización en torno a estos corredores

de mercancías no era una preocupación importante. Teniendo en cuenta el volumen de petróleo y otros materiales inflamables que se transportan ahora directamente a través de un denso desarrollo urbano, Denver podría correr el riesgo de sufrir una catástrofe de calibre similar a la de Palestina Oriental.

Ortega afirma haber oído decir al jefe de bomberos de Pueblo, que según ella ha impartido cursos de formación sobre incidentes relacionados con descarrilamientos, que “cuando se incendia uno de esos vagones de petróleo, ese producto arde tan caliente que puede quemar la fachada de un edificio y todo lo que hay en su interior”. En el caso de varios vagones cisterna llenos de petróleo en una secuencia a lo largo de un tren, una explosión podría provocar una reacción en cadena, agravando así el desastre.

Ortega, ni nadie a nivel municipal, tiene jurisdicción sobre los propios ferrocarriles, por lo que ha estado trabajando para aprobar una ordenanza que regule el uso del suelo y la urbanización a una cierta distancia de los corredores de trenes de mercancías. No quiere restringir el desarrollo, subraya, pero sí exigir determinados protocolos de seguridad en esas zonas para mitigar los efectos de un descarrilamiento. Estos protocolos podrían incluir la exigencia de que los edificios de apartamentos orienten sus aparcamientos hacia las vías del tren para crear una mayor barrera y/o que los promotores creen una berma entre un edificio y las vías del tren utilizando la tierra retirada para los cimientos del edificio.

Ortega quiere que estas medidas de seguridad sean obligatorias. “Llevamos diciendo desde 2014 que este es un tema



Photo/Foto: Debbie Ortega for Mayor

La candidata a la alcaldía de Denver, Debbie Ortega, escucha las preocupaciones de sus electores y trabaja para encontrar soluciones. / Denver Mayoral candidate Debbie Ortega listens to her constituents' concerns and works towards solutions.

que tenemos que analizar”, dijo. Ortega trabajó con un comité convocado por el alcalde en 2016 para crear un conjunto de directrices y reglamentos para este tema, pero ella dice que la persona clave de la oficina del alcalde sólo quería que estas regulaciones fueran voluntarias, no un requisito.

“Cuando haces algo voluntario en el mundo del desarrollo, significa que no tienes que hacerlo”, dijo Ortega. Y añadió que, de las 27 solicitudes de urbanización para proyectos cercanos al ferrocarril, ninguna cumplía las medidas de seguridad sugeridas.

La ley que Ortega está tratando de aprobar solucionaría este problema y otorgaría a los organismos municipales autoridad para hacer cumplir la normativa. “Queremos asegurarnos de que se aborda esta cuestión, y esta ordenanza permitirá hacerlo ahora”. Su intención es aprobar la ley antes de que termine su mandato como concejala. Sin embargo, afirma: “Si no se aprueba ahora, y yo [me convierto] en alcaldesa, me aseguraré de que se apruebe”.

“Proteger a los ciudadanos es una de nuestras principales responsabilidades”, afirma Ortega.

Otros temas importantes para Ortega son el coste de la vivienda y los sin techo. Quiere llevar a cabo una serie de iniciativas políticas que aborden la escasez de vivienda para todos los niveles

de renta.

Ha trabajado como presidenta del consejo de una organización sin ánimo de lucro que construye viviendas para personas con los niveles más bajos del AMI (Area Median Income). Los requisitos de unidades asequibles para los grandes proyectos urbanísticos han creado un parque de viviendas en el extremo superior de la escala AMI. “Sí, estamos extrayendo unidades asequibles de muchos de los grandes promotores... y eso es importante, pero la mayoría se encuentran en los niveles más altos del AMI. Son las organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro las que hacen los niveles más bajos de AMI”. Para crear una oferta de viviendas en el nivel medio del AMI, Ortega quiere construir viviendas prefabricadas en terrenos públicos.

Para abordar el problema de los sin techo, prevé un proceso multidimensional con un resultado que desemboque en la autosuficiencia de las personas que antes no tenían hogar.

“Al fin y al cabo, hemos utilizado fondos federales para ayudar a alojar a personas en muchos de estos lugares”, dijo Ortega, refiriéndose a los moteles que la ciudad ha comprado para utilizarlos como refugios. “Esa financiación se va a acabar, y cuando lo haga, nuestra ciudad no podrá mantenerla.”

Vea Ortega/Esp, página 19



# East High Students March Against Gun Violence After Death of Luis García

## COLORADO

By Erica Meltzer

Several hundred students from East High School chanted “No more silence! End gun violence!” as they marched to the Colorado State Capitol last Friday to tell lawmakers to do more to restrict access to guns.

Eighteen days had passed since Luis García was shot just outside the school, and two since the 16-year-old succumbed to his injuries. Students held signs bearing his name and No. 11, the number he wore on the soccer field. They observed 11 seconds of silence in his memory.

Clayton Thomas, who played soccer with Luis, recalled how hard-working Luis was, a quality family members described as well. At the end of each practice, players could stay an extra 15 minutes to practice independently. Luis would stay 30 minutes, Clayton said.

“What I wouldn’t give for an extra



East High students observed 11 seconds of silence in front of the Colorado State Capitol in memory of Luis García, a 16-year-old student who died after being shot outside the school last month. / Los estudiantes de East High guardaron 11 segundos de silencio frente al Capitolio del Estado de Colorado en memoria de Luis García, un estudiante de 16 años que murió tras recibir un disparo en el exterior de la escuela el mes pasado.

15 minutes with Luis right now,” Clayton said.

East High Students Demand Action, a group that advocates for gun control, organized the rally to coincide

with an advocacy day at the Capitol in support of a package of gun control bills. Democrats want to add a three-day waiting period for all gun purchases, prevent people younger than 21 from

purchasing guns, and expand who can seek to remove guns from an individual under Colorado’s “red flag” law.

The push for new state gun laws comes in the wake of November’s mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs, as well as rising gun violence in Denver and around the region.

Luis García was shot outside East High on the afternoon of Feb. 13. Denver police took two other Denver Public Schools students into custody later that afternoon on other charges. So far, they have not been charged in the shooting.

Luis was the second student shot near the 2,600-student school this academic year. East High also was the target of a swatting hoax in September that led to a lockdown and evacuation that left students and faculty rattled.

In the last week Recently, more than a dozen Colorado schools have been the target of swatting hoaxes.

Organizers canceled a forum on gun violence with local elected officials last Wednesday after news spread of Luis’ death.

Fabian Morris, a sophomore at East, said he didn’t know Luis well, but he’s known other people who were shot and wanted to support the cause.

“I used to think school was one of the safest places, but now I feel uneasy,” he said.

Celes Bufford, a senior and member of the East student council, echoed the sentiment.

“We’re down here because we’re tired,” she said. “There should be no reason that guns are more important than students, or people in general. No one feels safe.”

Ryan Lo, a junior at East, said he felt numb about the shooting until students gathered outside East to lay flowers in Luis’ memory. That’s when the loss hit home. Ryan noted that the same day Luis was shot, a gunman killed three people at Michigan State University.

Zach Fields, also a junior at East, said the frequency of gun violence makes it hard to comprehend.

“It doesn’t even feel real,” he said. “It feels like a movie.”

Erica Meltzer, Bureau Chief, Chalkbeat Colorado. This article was originally published by Chalkbeat.

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# Estudiantes de East High Marchan Contra la Violencia Armada Tras la Muerte de Luis García

## COLORADO

Por Erica Meltzer

Varios cientos de estudiantes de East High School corearon “¡No más silencio! ¡Fin de la violencia armada!” mientras marchaban hacia el Capitolio del Estado de Colorado el pasado viernes para pedir a los legisladores que hagan más para restringir el acceso a las armas.

Habían pasado dieciocho días desde que Luis García fuera tiroteado a las puertas del instituto, y dos desde que el joven de 16 años sucumbiera a sus heridas.

sucumbiera a sus heridas. Los alumnos portaban pancartas con su nombre y el número 11, el dorsal que llevaba en

el campo de fútbol. Guardaron 11 segundos de silencio en su memoria.

Clayton Thomas, que jugó al fútbol con Luis, recordó lo trabajador que era Luis, una cualidad que también describieron sus familiares. Al final de cada entrenamiento, los jugadores podían quedarse 15 minutos más para practicar de forma independiente. Luis se quedaba 30 minutos, dijo Clayton.

“Lo que daría por 15 minutos más con Luis en este momento”, dijo Clayton.

East High Estudiantes Exigen Acción, un grupo que aboga por el control de armas, organizó la manifestación para que coincida con un día de promoción en el Capitolio en apoyo de un paquete de proyectos de ley de control de armas. Los demócratas quieren añadir un periodo de espera de tres días para

todas las compras de armas, evitar que los menores de 21 años compren armas, y ampliar quién puede tratar de quitar las armas de un individuo bajo la ley de “bandera roja” de Colorado.

El impulso de nuevas leyes estatales sobre armas se produce tras el tiroteo masivo de noviembre en el Club Q de Colorado Springs, así como por el aumento de la violencia armada en Denver y en toda la región.

La tarde del 13 de febrero, Luis García fue tiroteado en el East High. La policía de Denver detuvo a otros dos estudiantes de las escuelas públicas de Denver esa misma tarde por otros cargos. Hasta el momento, no han sido acusados del tiroteo.

Luis era el segundo estudiante que sufrió disparos cerca de la escuela de 2.600 alumnos este año académico. En septiembre, East High también fue objeto de una broma de ‘swatting’ que provocó el cierre y la evacuación del centro y dejó a los estudiantes y al profesorado conmocionados.

En la última semana, más de una docena de escuelas de Colorado han sido objeto de bromas sobre tiroteos.

El pasado miércoles, los organizadores

cancelaron un foro sobre la violencia armada en el que participan cargos electos locales, después de que se difundiera



Los estudiantes de East High marcharon al Capitolio del Estado de Colorado el 3 de marzo de 2023 para unirse a un día de defensa de la legislación de control de armas. / East High students marched to the Colorado State Capitol on March 3, 2023 to join a day of advocacy for gun control legislation.

la noticia de la muerte de Luis.

Fabian Morris, estudiante de segundo año en East, dijo que no conocía bien a Luis, pero que ha conocido a otras personas que recibieron disparos y quería apoyar la causa.

“Solía pensar que la escuela era uno de los lugares más seguros, pero ahora me siento intranquilo”, dijo.

Celes Bufford, alumna de último curso y miembro del consejo estudiantil de East, se hizo eco del sentimiento.

“Estamos aquí porque estamos cansados”, dijo. “No debería haber ninguna razón por la que las armas sean más importantes que los estudiantes, o la gente en general. Nadie se siente seguro”.

Ryan Lo, estudiante de tercer año en East, dijo que se sintió insensible ante el tiroteo hasta que los estudiantes se reunieron fuera de East para depositar

flores en memoria de Luis. Fue entonces cuando sintió la pérdida. Ryan señaló que el mismo día en le dispararon a Luis, un hombre armado mató a tres personas en la Universidad Estatal de Michigan.

Zach Fields, también estudiante de tercer año en East, dijo que la frecuencia de la violencia armada hace que sea difícil de comprender.

“Ni siquiera parece real”, dijo. “Parece una película”.

Erica Meltzer, es jefa de la oficina de Chalkbeat Colorado. Esta historia fue publicada originalmente por Chalkbeat.

Traducido por Juan Carlos Uribe, The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.

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# Denver Students Organize March in Support of Reproductive Rights

## COLORADO

By Lindsey Toomer

**D**ozens of Denver high school students and supporters marched around the Colorado state Capitol and Civic Center Park to fight for reproductive rights Saturday.

With the support of New Era Colorado and other local advocacy organizations, the group of students from Denver East High School, George Washington High School and Northfield High School organized the march to make sure their generations' voices are heard by those making decisions impacting their lives and futures.

"Two hundred fifty-three days ago, people with the capacity for pregnancy had to wonder what their futures would look like; 253 days ago, part of our control was stripped away from us," said Sarita Patel, a George Washington student who led the efforts to organize the march. "The world is on fire. My world is on fire. My generation lives in fear. Our bodies, the one thing that we're supposed to have control of, is being stripped away from us. I don't see liberty in that. What I choose to do with my body should be my choice."



Luna Olin, left, and Tatum Lezotte, both sophomores at George Washington High School, perform an enactment of the difficulties of accessing abortion services during a student-led rally for reproductive rights at the Colorado Capitol in Denver, March 4, 2023. (Kevin Mohatt for Colorado Newsline)

Patel said that just because it's been some time since the Supreme Court decided to overturn a constitutional right to abortion established by Roe v. Wade doesn't mean those who care about access to abortion will stop fighting, as the decision still impacts people with uteruses across the country. This is what inspired her to bring together people from across multiple Denver high schools to plan the march — she said they just want to be heard.

"I look around me and I see how many individuals and students are hurt by these decisions that are being made for them, and I was tired of just watching all of my friends and my classmates and the people around me get angry about these decisions and not be able to do anything about it," Patel said.

Patel talked about how overwhelmed she felt by a prompt she had in English class asking "to what extent does individual responsibility matter



Sarita Patel, a junior at George Washington High School, speaks during a student-led rally for reproductive rights at the Colorado Capitol in Denver, March 4, 2023. (Kevin Mohatt for Colorado Newsline)

in the face of huge systemic problems?" as she never felt able to properly answer the question.

"The truth is that standing in front of huge systemic issues is terrifying. It seems hopeless. I mean, what can a 5-4 — 5-4 and a half if we're pushing it — 17-year-old biracial female girl do in the face of huge systemic issues that might have even the slightest impact?" Patel said. "I don't know. But I'm done waiting. I'm done waiting for these decisions to be made for me, about me right now."

On the west steps of the Capitol before the march began, multiple students and supporters, including Democratic state representative and Denver mayoral candidate Leslie Herod, shared stories about the history of reproduc-

tive rights, poems and performances. Herod said too many states are still seeing bills and legislation criminalizing those who perform the abortions, those seeking abortions and those who help others access an abortion.

"Right now, I have my colleagues in other states who are fighting to protect reproductive justice for all people, but unfortunately, they are losing that battle," Herod said.

Luna Olin and Tatum Lezzote, students at George Washington, shared a performance they created for their school's speech and debate program. The skit shows the difficulties a 17-year-old living in Missouri has trying to get an abortion, leading the two friends to

See [Rights](#) on page 17

## U.S. Rep. Caraveo, Gov. Polis Announce New Lithium-Ion Battery Factory



Photo: U.S. Rep. Caraveo

Colorado Congresswoman Yadira Caraveo recently announced plans to establish a gigawatt-scale factory in Brighton to support lithium-ion battery production for the U.S. electric mobility market.

## COLORADO

**C**ongresswoman Yadira Caraveo (CO-08) this week joined with Governor Jared Polis and the Global Business Development Division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade

(OEDIT) to formally announce Amprius Technologies, Inc. (NYSE:AMPX), a leader in lithium-ion batteries with its Silicon Anode Platform, has signed a letter of intent for a 775,000 square foot facility in Brighton, Colorado. Amprius plans to establish a gigawatt-scale factory to support lithium-ion battery production for the U.S. electric mobility market. The first phase of the expansion is expected to create 332 net new jobs at an average annual wage of \$68,516, which is 104 percent of the average annual wage in Adams County. These will include management, engineering, business support personnel, technicians, operators, and maintenance positions.

"Colorado is leading the way in technology development and innovation. I'm glad to see that leadership rewarded as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law starts vesting in Adams County. Attracting Amprius and other cutting-edge businesses to our community will stoke our local economy and create hundreds of good jobs. I look forward to their success and

See [Caraveo](#) on page 17

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COLORADO

# Struggling to Survive, First Rural Hospitals Line Up for New Federal Lifeline

## NEW MÉXICO

By Sarah Jane Tribble

Just off the historic U.S. Route 66 in eastern New Mexico, a 10-bed hospital has for decades provided emergency care for a steady flow of people injured in car crashes and ranching accidents.

It also has served as a close-to-home option for the occasional overnight patient, usually older residents with pneumonia or heart trouble. It's the only hospital for the more than 4,500 people living on a swath of 3,000 square miles of high plains and lakes east of Albuquerque.

"We want to be the facility that saves lives," said Christina Campos, administrator of Guadalupe County Hospital in Santa Rosa. Its leaders have no desire to grow or be a big, profitable business, she said.

But even with a tax levy to help support the medical outpost, the facility lost more than \$1 million in the past six months, Campos said: "For years, we've been anticipating kind of our own demise, praying that a program would come along and make us sustainable."

Guadalupe is one of the nation's first to start the process of converting into a Rural Emergency Hospital. The designation was created as part of the first new federal payment program launched by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for rural providers in 25 years. And though it is not expect-



Christina Campos (center right) speaks to staff in the emergency department at Guadalupe County Hospital in Santa Rosa, New Mexico. / Christina Campos (parada) habla con el personal del departamento de emergencias del Hospital del Condado de Guadalupe en Santa Rosa, Nuevo México.

ed to be a permanent solution to pressures facing rural America, policymakers and hospital operators alike hope it will slow the financial hemorrhage that continues to shutter those communities' hospitals.

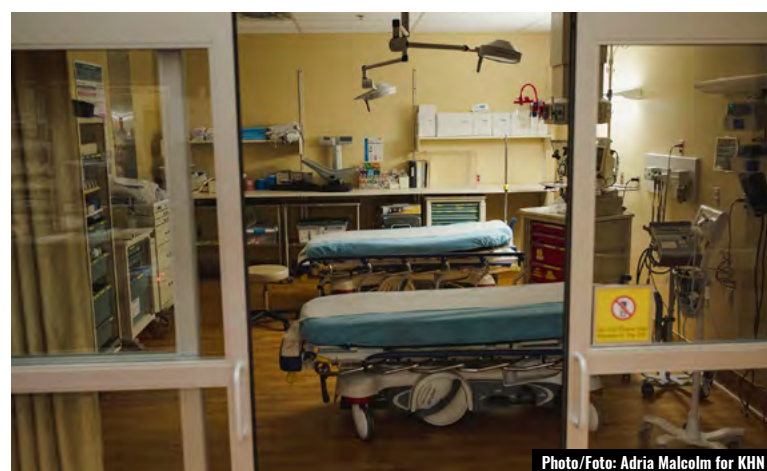
More than 140 rural hospitals have closed nationwide since 2010, and health policy watchers aren't sure how many of the more than 1,700 rural facilities eligible for the new designation will apply. CMS officials said late last month that seven have already filed applications. Dr. Lee Fleisher, director of the Center for Clinical Standards and Quality at CMS, said how long it will take to review the applications will vary. The agency declined to provide the names or locations of hospitals seeking the designation.

Facilities that convert will get a 5% increase in Medicare payments as well

as an average annual facility fee payment of about \$3.2 million in exchange for giving up their expensive inpatient beds and focusing solely on emergency and outpatient care. Rural hospitals with no more than 50 beds that closed after the law passed on Dec. 27, 2020, are eligible to apply for the new payment model if they reopen.

The new program "strikes me as the first time we are saying, you know, maybe we can just take the beds away," said Dr. Paula Chatterjee, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. Outpatient and emergency visits already make up about 66% of Medicare payments for rural hospitals that are eligible to convert, according to Chatterjee's recent research.

Still, she found that many would likely need to scale up some outpatient



The interior of an emergency room at the Guadalupe County Hospital in Santa Rosa, New Mexico. / El interior de un cuarto de la sala de emergencias en el Hospital del Condado de Guadalupe en Santa Rosa, Nuevo México.

services, such as telehealth and substance use care. Even then the payment model might not be able to shift the "foundational pressures" of declining, aging, and sicker populations that are making it hard to deliver care in rural America, she said.

"This feels like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic," Chatterjee said.

More than 50 hospitals and other organizations have expressed interest in the rural emergency designation, said Janice Walters, chief operating officer of programs for the Rural Health Redesign Center, which has a federal grant to provide technical assistance to facilities interested in converting.

Most hospitals "are still trying to figure out, 'Is the math going to work?'" Walters said.

Those showing immediate interest are very small, with three or fewer patients staying overnight any given day, and, generally, they long ago gave up maternity care to save on expenses. The federal law will need to be amended to help larger rural hospitals with more overnight stays, said Brock Slabach, chief operations officer for the National Rural Health Association.

"It's enough for now," Slabach said.

"But is it going to be enough for the long term? I don't think so." Top priorities for the group include adding the ability for hospitals to participate in a federal drug discount program and allowing for longer patient stays.

At Stillwater Medical in Oklahoma, Chief Administrative Officer Steven Taylor said the switch already makes sense for two of the system's smaller hospitals that "have struggled financially." The small regional health system's outpost in Perry, which rarely has more than two inpatients a day, has already filed an application, and its facility in Blackwell will likely do so soon, he said.

Keeping emergency services "is the most important thing" for the small communities, he said. The new model requires a 24-hour emergency department and a clinician on call. It also caps the average length of patient stays at 24 hours — which Taylor said is not a problem. One patient may need to be watched for 12 hours for chest pain while another, with pneumonia, may need to stay for 36 hours, but that will average out to less than 24 hours for the year, he said.

Plus, he said, anybody who needs more intense care can be transferred to their regional hospital in Stillwater. Oklahoma, like other states, is working to update state laws for licensing or regulations to ensure hospitals can be credentialed with the rural emergency designation quickly.

John Henderson, president and chief executive of the Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals, agreed with other speakers at the National Rural Health Association's February policy conference in Washington, D.C. The new rule "could be a relief valve" for very small rural hospitals, he said. A two-bed facility in Crosbyton confirmed for Henderson earlier that day that it was the first in Texas to be approved for the new payment mechanism.

Henderson said he knew of several more of the state's 158 rural hospitals that are applying or have already applied, and others are considering it: "These are the folks that are just hanging on."

Dr. Denise Brown, CEO of virtual care provider Fident, spoke up from the front row during Henderson's

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# Hospitales Rurales Aplican a Nuevo Programa Federal para Intentar Sobrevivir

## NEW MÉXICO

Por Sarah Jane Tribble

Justo al lado de la histórica Ruta 66, en el este de Nuevo México, un hospital de 10 camas ha brindado atención de emergencia durante décadas a un flujo constante de personas lesionadas en accidentes automovilísticos y accidentes de ganadería.

También ha servido como una opción cercana al hogar para el paciente ocasional que pasa la noche, generalmente residentes mayores con neumonía o problemas cardíacos. Es el único hospital para las más de 4,500 personas que viven en una franja de 3,000 millas cuadradas de llanuras altas y lagos, al este de Albuquerque.

“Queremos ser el centro que salva vidas”, dijo Christina Campos, administradora del Hospital del Condado de Guadalupe en Santa Rosa. Sus líderes no tienen ningún interés en crecer o ser un negocio grande y rentable, dijo.

Pero incluso con un gravamen fiscal para ayudar a mantener el puesto médico, la instalación perdió más de \$1 millón en los últimos seis meses, explicó Campos: “Durante años, hemos estado anticipando nuestra propia desaparición, rezando para que apareciera un programa que nos volviera sostenibles”.

Guadalupe es uno de los primeros del país en iniciar el proceso de conversión para transformarse en un Hospital Rural de Emergencia. La designación se creó como parte del nuevo programa de pago federal lanzado por los Centros de Servicios de Medicare y Medicaid (CMS) para proveedores rurales, el primero en 25 años.

Y aunque no se espera que sea una solución permanente a las presiones que enfrentan las zonas rurales de Estados Unidos, tanto los responsables de formular políticas como los operadores de hospitales esperan que frene la hemorragia financiera que continúa cerrando hospitales en esas comunidades.

Más de 140 hospitales rurales han cerrado en todo el país desde 2010, y observadores de políticas de salud no

están seguros de cuántas de las más de 1,700 instalaciones rurales elegibles para la nueva designación aplicarán.

Funcionarios de los CMS dijeron a fines de febrero que siete ya han presentado solicitudes. El doctor Lee Fleisher, director del Centro de Estándares Clínicos y Calidad de los CMS, dijo que el tiempo que tomará revisar las solicitudes variará. La agencia se negó a proporcionar los nombres o ubicaciones de los hospitales que buscan la designación.

Las instalaciones cambien su designación obtendrán un aumento del 5% en los pagos de Medicare, así como un pago anual promedio de la tarifa de la instalación de alrededor de \$3.2 millones a cambio de renunciar a sus costosas camas para pacientes hospitalizados y centrarse únicamente en la atención de emergencia y ambulatoria.

Los hospitales rurales con 50 camas o menos que cerraron después de la aprobación de la ley el 27 de diciembre de 2020 son elegibles para solicitar el nuevo modelo de pago si reabren.

El nuevo programa “me sorprende como la primera vez que decimos, ya sabes, tal vez podamos sacar las camas”, dijo la doctora Paula Chatterjee, profesora asistente de la Facultad de Medicina Perelman de la Universidad de Pennsylvania. Las visitas ambulatorias y de emergencia ya representan alrededor del 66% de los pagos de Medicare para hospitales rurales que son elegibles para convertirse, según una investigación reciente de Chatterjee.

Aun así, descubrió que es probable que muchos necesiten ampliar algunos servicios ambulatorios, como la telesalud y la atención de adicciones. Incluso entonces, es posible que el modelo de pago no pueda cambiar las “presiones fundamentales” de las poblaciones en declive, el envejecimiento y las enfermedades que dificultan la prestación de atención en las zonas rurales del país, explicó.

“Esto se siente como reorganizar las sillas de cubierta en el Titanic”, dijo Chatterjee.

Más de 50 hospitales y otras organizaciones han expresado interés en la

designación de emergencia rural, dijo Janice Walters, directora de operaciones de programas del Rural Health Redesign Center, que tiene una subvención federal para brindar asistencia técnica a las instalaciones interesadas en convertirse.

La mayoría de los hospitales “todavía están tratando de descifrar la pregunta, ‘¿Funcionarán las matemáticas?’”, dijo Walters.

Los que muestran un interés inmediato son muy pequeños, con tres o menos pacientes que se quedan a pasar la noche en un día determinado y, en general, hace tiempo que abandonaron la atención de maternidad para ahorrar en gastos. Será necesario enmendar la ley federal para ayudar a los hospitales rurales más grandes con más estadías nocturnas, dijo Brock Slabach, director de operaciones de la Asociación Nacional de Salud Rural.

“Es suficiente por ahora”, dijo Slabach. “Pero, ¿será suficiente a largo plazo? No me parece”. Las principales prioridades del grupo incluyen sumar capacidad para que los hospitales participen en un programa federal de descuentos en medicamentos y permitir estadías más prolongadas para los pacientes.

En Stillwater Medical, en Oklahoma, el director administrativo Steven Taylor dijo que el cambio ya tiene sentido para dos de los hospitales más pequeños del sistema que “han tenido problemas financieros”. El puesto de avanzada del pequeño sistema de salud regional en Perry, que rara vez tiene más de dos pacientes hospitalizados por día, ya presentó una solicitud, y su instalación en Blackwell probablemente lo hará pronto, dijo.

Mantener los servicios de emergencia “es lo más importante” para las pequeñas comunidades, enfatizó. El nuevo modelo requiere un departamento de emergencias las 24 horas y un médico de guardia. También limita la duración promedio de las estadías de los pacientes a 24 horas, lo que, según Taylor, no es un problema.

Es posible que un paciente deba ser observado durante 12 horas por dolor en el pecho, mientras que otro, con



Foto/Photo: Adria Malcolm for KHN

El administrador asistente y gerente de laboratorio Frank Tenorio y la administradora Christina Campos revisa la legislación para las designaciones de hospitales rurales en el Hospital del Condado de Guadalupe en Santa Rosa, Nuevo México. / Assistant administrator and lab manager Frank Tenorio listens as administrator Christina Campos goes over legislation for rural hospital designations at Guadalupe County Hospital in Santa Rosa, New Mexico.

neumonía, deba permanecer durante 36 horas, pero eso promediará menos de 24 horas por año, dijo.

Agregó que, además, cualquier persona que necesite una atención más intensa puede ser trasladada a su hospital regional en Stillwater. Oklahoma, al igual que otros estados, está trabajando para actualizar las leyes estatales de licencias o regulaciones para garantizar que los hospitales puedan acreditarse rápidamente con la designación rural de emergencia.

John Henderson, presidente y director ejecutivo de la Organización de Hospitales Rurales y Comunitarios de Texas, estuvo de acuerdo con otros oradores en la conferencia de políticas de febrero de la Asociación Nacional de Salud Rural en Washington, D.C.

La nueva regla “podría ser una válvula de escape” para los hospitales rurales muy pequeños, expresó. Una instalación de dos camas en Crosbyton le confirmó a Henderson ese mismo día que era la primera en Texas en ser aprobada para el nuevo mecanismo de pago.

Henderson aseguró que sabía de varios más entre los 158 hospitales rurales del estado que están solicitando o ya lo han hecho, y otros lo están considerando.

La doctora Denise Brown, directora ejecutiva del proveedor de atención virtual Fident, habló desde la primera fila durante la presentación de Henderson. Su empresa utiliza telesalud para que los médicos y otros profesionales de salud puedan trabajar virtualmente con múltiples hospitales en diferentes estados.

Brown dijo que le preocupaba que los hospitales que se convirtieran no tengan suficientes ambulancias disponibles, o un lugar para enviar pacien-

tes más enfermos, especialmente si no son parte de un sistema de salud más grande.

Las cabezas comenzaron a asentir en toda la sala llena de gente. Muchos hospitales rurales necesitaron todas las camas que tenían durante lo peor de la pandemia de covid-19, y renunciar a esas camas ahora parece contradictorio.

A menudo, esos mismos hospitales rurales descubren que las instalaciones más grandes se niegan a recibir a sus pacientes que necesitan atención especializada, dijo Brown.

“¿Cómo sé que puedo garantizarle a alguien una cama?”, dijo Brown, y agregó que prefiere que los hospitales rurales mantengan a los pacientes por más tiempo. ¿Cómo explicaría a los familiares preocupados que su ser querido está “a dos o tres horas de casa”?

Sarah Jane Tribble, corresponsal jefe, KHN (Kaiser Health News). KHN (Kaiser Health News) es la redacción de KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), que produce periodismo en profundidad sobre salud. Es uno de los tres principales programas de KFF, una organización sin fines de lucro que analiza la problemática de salud y salud pública de la nación.

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Hasting y Torres

del fentanilo. Y eso convierte en más perversa aún su estrategia de avanzar a costa de lo que sea en busca de regresar a la Casa Blanca.

Pero eso va más allá, porque los nativistas blancos antes limitados a los márgenes del Partido Republicano, ahora figuran prominentemente en el discurso de la colectividad y son invitados a testificar en audiencias del Congreso legitimando las mentiras que repiten. El problema es que de esas voces se han hecho eco terroristas domésticos blancos que han perpetrado masacres en espacios de alta concentración de minorías, como en El Paso en 2019 o en Buffalo en 2022.

De hecho, muchos son negacionistas trumpianos que todavía siguen repitiendo la burda mentira de que a Donald Trump le “robaron” la elección de 2020. Son los mismos que justificaron la intentona de golpe de estado del 6 de enero de 2021, y que condonan la violencia como estrategia electoral, sin entender ni aceptar los pormenores de una democracia, especialmente como la hasta hoy más plena que existe en el planeta. En otras palabras, son agentes antidemocráticos porque solo si pierden elecciones argumentan que hubo fraude; pero si ganan, el sistema entonces sí les parece funcionar.

A esto sumemos el oscurantismo que estos personajes promueven, y que ya se ha normalizado en las plataformas de políticos como el gobernador de Florida, Ron DeSantis, y su aval a

la prohibición de libros que detallen la historia de esta nación con sus capítulos más nefastos, como la esclavitud y la discriminación. O su nueva serie de propuestas para básicamente convertir Florida en un infierno para los migrantes indocumentados, una de cuyas más hirientes y ofensivas ideas es imponer 15 años de prisión a las madres que transporten a sus hijos indocumentados a la escuela. Realmente repulsivo.

Por ello, no deja de sorprender que en un estado como Florida, que ha recibido a refugiados que huyen de dictaduras, violencia y persecución, esas mismas personas apoyen a políticos como DeSantis que promueven las mismas cosas de las cuales huyeron en primer lugar. Pero ese es tema para otra columna.

Sin embargo, lo que sí podemos adelantar es que lo que buscan personajes como DeSantis es sumar puntos políticos de entre los segmentos más oscuros y extremistas no solo de Florida, sino de todo el país, al politizar de manera siniestra el tema migratorio, acusando a los indocumentados de todos los males, cuando él mismo sabe cuán importantes son para la economía de su propio estado y de la nación.

Maribel Hastings, Senior Advisor, *América's Voice*. David Torres, Asesor en Español, *América's Voice*.

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Hastings & Torres

strategy to try to return to the White House, at any cost, has become.

But it goes even further, because white nativists—once limited to the margins of the Republican Party—now figure prominently in the collective discourse and are invited to testify in congressional hearings, legitimizing the lies they repeat. The problem is that those voices have been echoed by white domestic terrorists who perpetrated massacres in spaces with a high concentration of minorities, as in El Paso in 2019 and Buffalo in 2022.

In fact, many are Trumpist deniers who still continue to repeat the crude lie that Donald Trump was “robbed” of the 2020 election. They are the same ones who justified the attempted *coup d'état* on January 6, 2021, and who condemn the violence as an electoral strategy without understanding or accepting the underpinnings of a democracy, especially the most complete one on the planet to this day. In other words, they are anti-democratic agents because they only cry fraud if they lose elections; but if they win, the system seems to be functioning fine to them.

To that we add the deceit that those characters promote, that has already been normalized in the platforms of politicians like the governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, and his affinity to ban books that detail the history of

this country, including its most nefarious chapters, like slavery and discrimination. Or his new series of proposals to basically turn Florida into a death trap for undocumented immigrants. One of his most damaging and offensive ideas is to impose 15 years in prison for mothers who transport their undocumented children to school. How repulsive.

It never stops being surprising that in a state like Florida, which has taken in refugees fleeing dictators, violence, and persecution, the same people support politicians like DeSantis who promote the same things they fled in the first place. But that's a topic for another column.

However, what we can state is that what characters like DeSantis are looking for is to rack up political points among one of the darkest, most extreme segments, not only in Florida but the entire country. To sinisterly politicize the immigration issue, accusing undocumented people for all the ills, when even DeSantis knows how important they are for the economy of his own state and the nation.

Maribel Hastings, Senior Advisor, *América's Voice*. David Torres, Spanish-language Advisor, *América's Voice*.

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Rosenthal

Smoking was normative in America until public health officials took it on. What allowed smoking bans in public places to gain traction was decades-long public health work to re-image the cigarette — frequently and forcefully — by officials like Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

The anti-smoking campaigns depicted the health scourge with images and language that were often deeply disturbing. That message was then echoed by public service announcements featuring celebrities from sports and films. Research has found that such emotionally charged ads can work in smoking cessation.

Today we recognize guns as a public health threat. So it's time to act with the same kind of visceral public campaign that put my dad's cigarettes into the toilet.

Today's public service announcements on gun safety feel somewhat sanitized. None really captures the horrifying physical and emotional damage caused by guns. Maybe if we showed the public what it looks like when a kid is shot, the shock and disgust — a view of reality — would counter the social glamour of guns.

The airwaves and social media channels are filled with messages urging young people to attend to their mental health. Where are the ads saying it's not cool to pack a pistol? Would filmmakers commit to making action movies without guns, just as filmmakers stopped making smoking sexy in films?

There will, of course, be debate about whether the images of gunfire and bodies would be traumatizing, especially to kids and victims' families. But some may feel differently. Emmett Till's mother demanded that his body be displayed in an open coffin because “everybody needed to know what happened to Emmett Till.” Disturbing images have proved powerful in awakening public outrage and prompting action: The horrific video of George Floyd's murder lent fuel to the Black Lives Matter movement.

If we want gun violence to end, there may be little choice but to show the public the true damage of guns in all its ugliness and brutality.

Elisabeth Rosenthal, Editor-in-Chief, *Kaiser Health News (KHN)*, the newsroom of KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which produces in-depth journalism on health. It is one of the three main programs of KFF, a non-profit organization that analyzes the problems of health and public health in the nation.

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Shah

in jobs with poor working conditions — undermining labor protections for all. And fixing our broken immigration system will also fuel wage and job growth for native-born Americans.

The Biden administration and Congress should use this moment to re-engage in stalled discussions over creating a path to citizenship for our immigrant co-workers, neighbors, and loved ones.

**2. We need a border management system that allows children to be with their parents as they seek protection.**

Why are the children laboring in these conditions here without their parents? For some, their parents may not have been allowed to enter the country alongside them, due to restrictive policies like one known as Title 42. It's a Trump-era policy initially used to shut down the asylum system during the pandemic. President Biden has embraced it for far too long. Policies like this force parents to make an impossible choice: Send their kids alone to the U.S., or keep them in dangerous situations at home or in Mexican border towns, waiting in limbo.

Rather than solving this problem, the Biden administration recently announced its intent to implement a new asylum ban that would continue to restrict many families from accessing asylum together. The ACLU called on the Biden administration to abandon this plan, which mimics the illegal Trump asylum bans that courts halted after our lawsuits.

Kids seeking asylum and other protections should be allowed to enter the country and seek those protections with their parents. Keeping families together is the best way to ensure that children are cared for and kept safe from exploitation.

**3. We need to provide legal counsel and services to these children.**

Why are migrant children working in dangerous jobs in the first place — especially since the U.S. government knows they are here and they are in the process of seeking legal protections?

First, as many as half of all unaccompanied children do not have lawyers. For children old enough to work and who are eligible, a lawyer could support them in applying for a work permit. Without work authorization, these older children are left to work in the shadow economy.

More broadly, these children need lawyers to help them navigate the complex legal system and act as a trusted adult to whom they can turn for help. The White House's interagency task force should heed advocates' longstanding calls to ensure legal representation for unaccompanied children — as well as offer social services for their health and well-being.

Naureen Shah, Senior Legislative Counsel and Advisor, *American Civil Liberties Union*.

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## Caraveo

will continue using my position on the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee to build on this investment as we power the economy of the future right here in Colorado," said Rep. Yadira Caraveo.

"We need more batteries to power the future, and now we will be manufacturing more of them right here in Colorado. We are excited to welcome Amprius to Colorado, bringing over 300 new good-paying jobs, and joining Colorado's innovative and collaborative business community," said Gov. Polis.

Amprius is one of the first companies to receive funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which was signed into law in 2021, to expand domestic manufacturing of electric vehicle and electrical grid batteries.

Amprius plans to invest \$190 million, including the \$50 million cost sharing grant from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains, to provide a potential capacity of up to 5 gigawatt hours (GWh).

"The selection of Colorado for our gigawatt factory marks an important milestone for Amprius," said Dr. Kang Sun, Chief Executive Officer of Amprius Technologies. "We worked closely with the State of Colorado, the Colorado Economic Development Commission, Adams County, and the City of Brighton to align on terms that are mutually beneficial, which includes a comprehensive incentive proposal. Increasing production to meet the substantial market demand for our breakthrough silicon anode lithium-ion technology remains a priority, and we are confident this factory will allow us to scale and effectively serve the electric mobility market."

Amprius also selected the Brighton, Colorado location because of its potential to streamline time-to-market and support effective customer fulfillment. The site's size, its proximity to essential materials, the transportation structure and the electric power and structural layout are expected to help reduce build-out costs as well as logistical and operational costs. Additional acreage at the site also has the potential to enable future expansions for a total potential manufacturing capacity of 10 GWh.

"Colorado's cleantech industry has an economic impact of \$4.6 billion per year and employs over 62,000 Colorado workers. By choosing Colorado for expansion, Amprius will add to this increasingly important sector of employment and become a key player in Colorado's commitment to adopt clean energy technologies," said Eve Lieberman, Executive Director of OEDIT.

The Colorado Economic Development Commission approved up to

\$5,491,784 in performance-based Job Growth Incentive Tax Credits for Amprius, over an 8-year period. These incentives are contingent upon the company, referred to as Project Maverick throughout the OEDIT review process, meeting net new job creation and salary requirements.

In addition, the City of Brighton approved incentives with a total estimated value of \$929,050, including a five-year property tax rebate of 100% and a 50% rebate on the city's use tax collected on construction materials.

"Brighton City Council and the City of Brighton leadership team are excited to welcome Amprius Technologies Inc. to our community," said Robin Martinez, Brighton Economic Development Corporation President & CEO. "We have a highly-skilled workforce and a collaborative regional approach to attracting and supporting new and existing companies in Brighton. In just three months, our office collaborated with our regional support system to include OEDIT, Adams County Economic Development, Adams County Workforce Development, Aims Community College, AC-REP, Metro Denver EDC, United Power, Xcel Energy and various other local partners to implement a customized and time-sensitive support plan to ensure Amprius Technology Inc. has what they need to meet their expansion and timeline goals, now and in the years to come."

The Adams County Board of County Commissioners will also consider an economic development incentive agreement at a March 14 public meeting. Board Chair Steve O'Dorisio noted, "We are happy to welcome Amprius to Adams County and look forward to a continued partnership as they grow and develop their innovative battery technology right here in Brighton. The jobs they create will not only benefit our current local residents, but also help to expand future career paths in the renewable energy sector."

"We're thrilled to welcome Amprius Technologies to the Metro Denver region," said president of the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, Raymond H. Gonzales. "With one of the leading clean technology industries in the nation and an electric vehicle market that's constantly growing, Colorado needs companies like Amprius Technologies to ensure we're ready for all our future developments and endeavors. Their expansion in Metro Denver will give us the tools we need to continue our technological growth and success."

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## Rights

travel across state lines so they can receive the care they need without going through their parents.

Olin said they wanted to pick a topic that could be an educational opportunity for others since the speech and debate program is "very privileged and very white." The duo typically performs the piece at different schools and speech and debate tournaments, and Olin said they never expected to bring it to an event like the march.

"I think it's nice because it feels more like directly making an impact versus being at a random school with parent volunteers," Olin said.

Camila Navarrette, New Era's communications director, said that because the organization works with high school students regularly, they were eager to help when the students organizing the march asked for support. She said it's important for young people to show that they care and are paying attention to decisions that impact them.

"We're all about engaging young people in the political process, and as you can see today, that starts young — that's not just voting," Navarrette said. "This is just important for students to proactively show that 'We are here, we

are voting, we are engaged and we're gonna vote on this."

Other organizations supporting the student march included Planned Parenthood, Cobalt, Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights, Soul 2 Soul Sisters, Elephant Circle, ProgressNow and the ACLU of Colorado.

Colorado Democrats are planning to bring forward a package of reproductive rights measures in the Legislature in the coming weeks to further expand access to reproductive health care. Abortion remains legal in Colorado.

"Adults who can vote have more power and they have more ability to voice their opinions, but these laws are affecting us and we have no way to express or vote on these decisions even though they directly impact our demographic," Patel said. "So what other choice do we have than to show that we still care about these issues if we can't vote."

Lindsey Toomer, reporter, Colorado Newsline.  
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## Hospitals

presentation. Her company uses telehealth so doctors and other clinicians can work virtually with multiple hospitals in different states. Brown said she was concerned that hospitals that convert won't have enough ambulances available to transport or a place to send sicker patients, especially if they aren't part of a larger health system.

Heads began to nod throughout the crowded room. Many rural hospitals needed every bed they had during the worst of the covid-19 pandemic, and to give up those beds now seems counterintuitive.

Those same rural hospitals often find that larger facilities refuse to take their patients who need specialized care, Brown said.

"How do I know that I can guarantee somebody a bed?" Brown said, adding that she prefers rural hospitals keep patients longer. How would she explain to concerned family members that their loved one was "two or three hours from home"?

Sarah Jane Tribble, Senior Correspondent, Kaiser Health News (KHN), the newsroom of KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which produces in-depth journalism on health. It is one of the three main programs of KFF, a non-profit organization that analyzes the problems of health and public health in the nation.

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## Ortega

with a committee convened by the mayor in 2016 to create a set of guidelines and regulations for this issue, but she says the point-person from the mayor's office only wanted these regulations to be voluntary, not a requirement.

"When you make something voluntary in the development world, it means you don't have to do it," said Ortega. She continued, saying that of the 27 applications for development for near-railroad projects, not one adhered to the suggested safety measures.

The ordinance Ortega is now working to pass would fix that and give city agencies the authority to enforce the regulations. "We want to make sure this issue is being addressed, and this ordinance will allow that to happen now." She intends to pass the legislation before her term ends as a council-person. However, she says, "If it doesn't go through now, and I [become] the mayor, I will make damn sure it goes through."

"Protecting our public is one of the number one responsibilities we have," says Ortega.

Other issues important to Ortega include the cost of housing and homelessness. She wants to pursue a variety of policy initiatives that would address housing shortages for all income levels.

She has worked as a board chair for a non-profit that builds housing for people at the lowest levels of AMI (Area Median Income). Affordable unit requirements for large development projects have created housing stock at the higher end of the AMI scale. "Yes, we are extracting afford-

able units out of a lot of the big developers...and that's important, but most of that is at the higher AMI levels. It's the non-profits that do the lower AMI levels." To create housing supply at the middle AMI level, Ortega wants to pursue building manufactured housing on public land.

“

*"I think my skill set, my passion and commitment to this city, the fact that I know how to get things done in Denver, I know how it works, is really what led me to this decision to jump into this race."*

*Debbie Ortega, Denver Mayoral Candidate*

To address homelessness, she envisions a multi-dimensional process with an outcome that results in self-sufficiency for formerly homeless people.

"At the end of the day, we've used federal dollars to help house individuals in many of these places," said Ortega, referring to motels the city has purchased to use as shelters. "That funding is going to run out, and when it does, our city can't sustain that. I want to make sure we're doing everything we can to help move people to self-sufficiency, so we don't get to a place where we say 'oh we're going to close all these places and now you're on your own.'"

Ortega, first and foremost, wants to create stability for homeless people via sanctioned encampments. Then, she would have the city work with various non-profits, advocacy organizations, and employers to create employment opportunities for these individuals. Crucially, this would involve job and skill training which would therefore create "opportunities for people to take advantage of more livable-wage jobs, so that we're not just continuing to put people into minimum wage jobs where they're living or working in a city where the housing costs are so expensive."

"There are a lot of private entities, there's a group called Careerwise, there are many other organizations that are working to reskill and up-skill individuals. They have relationships with employers, our workforce system has relationships with employers who are all dying for workers," says Ortega.

Ortega says she used to work at the Denver Road Home program, where she secured a grant to hire someone to help them work with a nonprofit agency called Bayaud Enterprises. With them, they worked with downtown hotel managers to do a one-week training with people interested in going into the hospitality industry. They had over 200 formerly unhoused people go through this process, many of whom, she says, are still working in hotels and have since moved up the ladder.

But stability and ongoing advocacy are critical throughout this process, according to Ortega.

She says an employment navigator from the agency worked throughout this process—as a kind of caseworker—to advocate for individuals as they transitioned from the extremely different lifestyle that comes with being homeless to working a full-time job. "If there was a hiccup with that person not showing up or feeling like they weren't worthy of this opportunity, that navigator would



Photo/Foto: Debbie Ortega for Mayor

Denver Councilwoman Debbie Ortega is a candidate for Denver mayor with 40 years of experience in public service.

work with that manager or the supervisor and say, 'can you give them a little bit of slack? We'll help make sure they come back,' and just help that person get through that hurdle. And it stabilized their lives." Ortega continued, "A lot of those people really took pride in what they were doing."

Ortega has many other ideas and initiatives which she would pursue as mayor. However, many candidates have initiatives and ideas. Ortega's strength, she says, would be her ability to implement legislation—whether on her own accord or on the accord of the electorate—efficiently and effectively.

On her decision to run, she said, "I took a step back. I first talked to my

family and said, 'I could move on and retire and enjoy my grandkids and just be content,' but I just felt an obligation to really take a serious look at this. Because, I think my skill set, my passion and commitment to this city, the fact that I know how to get things done in Denver, I know how it works, is really what led me to this decision to jump into this race."

Read more about Debbie Ortega [here](#).

Benjamin Neufeld, Independent Reporter, The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.

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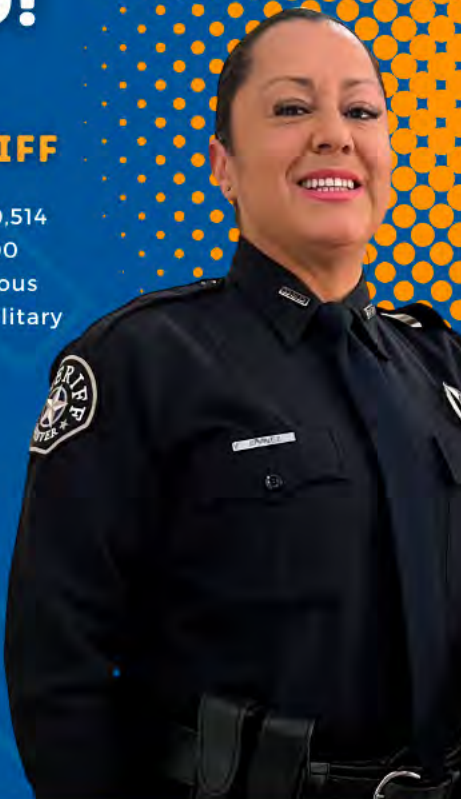
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## Ortega/Esp



Photo/Foto: Debbie Ortega for Mayor

La concejala de Denver Debbie Ortega es candidata a la alcaldía de Denver con 40 años de experiencia en el servicio público.

Quiero asegurarme de que estamos haciendo todo lo posible para ayudar a la gente a ser autosuficiente, para que no lleguemos a un punto en el que digamos “oh, vamos a cerrar todos estos lugares y ahora estás por vuestra cuenta”.



*“Creo que mis habilidades, mi pasión y mi compromiso con esta ciudad, el hecho de que sé cómo hacer las cosas en Denver, sé cómo funciona, es realmente lo que me llevó a tomar la decisión de lanzarme a esta candidatura”.*

*Debbie Ortega, Candidata a la Alcaldía de Denver*

Ortega quiere, ante todo, crear estabilidad para los sin techo mediante campamentos autorizados. Después, quiere que la ciudad trabaje con varias organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro, organizaciones de defensa de los derechos de los sin techo y empleadores para crear oportunidades de empleo para estas personas. Para ello, sería crucial la formación laboral y profesional, que crearía “oportunidades para que la gente se beneficie de empleos con salarios más dignos, de modo que no sigamos colocando a la gente en empleos con salarios mínimos en los que viven o trabajan en una ciudad en la que los costes de la vivienda son tan altos”.

“Hay muchas entidades privadas, un grupo llamado Careerwise y muchas otras organizaciones que trabajan para mejorar la cualificación de las personas. Tienen relaciones con empresarios, nuestro sistema de mano de obra tiene relaciones con empresarios que se mueren por trabajadores”, dice Ortega.

Ortega cuenta que solía trabajar en el programa Denver Road Home, donde consiguió una subvención para contratar a alguien que les ayudara a trabajar con una agencia sin ánimo de lucro llamada Bayaud Enterprises. Con ellos, trabajaban con directores

de hoteles del centro de la ciudad para impartir formación de una semana a personas interesadas en entrar en el sector de la hostelería. Pasaron por ese proceso más de 200 personas que antes no tenían vivienda, muchas de las cuales, dice, siguen trabajando en hoteles y han ascendido.

Pero, según Ortega, la estabilidad y la defensa continua son fundamentales durante todo el proceso.

Dice que un orientador laboral de la agencia trabajó durante todo el proceso -como una especie de asistente social- para ayudar a las personas en su transición del estilo de vida extremadamente diferente que supone ser un sin techo a tener un trabajo a tiempo completo. “Si había algún contratiempo y la persona no se presentaba o no se sentía merecedora de esta oportunidad, el orientador trabajaba con el director o el supervisor y le decía: ‘¿puedes darles un poco de margen? Le ayudaremos a asegurarse de que vuelve’, y le ayudaba a superar ese obstáculo. Y eso estabilizó sus vidas”. Ortega continuó: “Muchas de esas personas estaban realmente orgullosas de lo que hacían”.

Ortega tiene muchas otras ideas e iniciativas que llevaría a cabo como alcaldesa. Sin embargo, muchos candidatos tienen iniciativas e ideas. El punto fuerte de Ortega, dice, sería su capacidad para aplicar la legislación -ya sea por decisión propia o del electorado- de forma eficiente y eficaz.

Sobre su decisión de presentarse, dijo: “Di un paso atrás. Primero hablé con mi familia y le dije: ‘Podría seguir adelante y jubilarme y disfrutar de mis nietos y estar contenta’, pero sentí la obligación de planteármelo seriamente. Porque creo que mis habilidades, mi pasión y mi compromiso con esta ciudad, el hecho de que sé cómo hacer las cosas en Denver, sé cómo funciona, es realmente lo que me llevó a tomar la decisión de lanzarme a esta candidatura”.

Lea más sobre Debbie Ortega [aquí](#).

*Benjamin Neufeld, Reportera Independiente, The Weekly Issue/El Semanario. Traducido por Juan Carlos Uribe, The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.*

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## Pruit

Barriers that prevent formerly incarcerated people from voting are nothing less than attempts to disenfranchise people who are likelier to be people of color, or who come from low-income backgrounds.

Policies like this represent yet another way the system silences our voices and disempowers our communities. But our strength is in our fight, which is why people like me are speaking at the Roundhouse about the importance of passing HB4.

Although many of us are working, paying taxes, and contributing to our communities, we are still being denied the opportunity to participate in elections that impact our lives.

HB 4 makes it clear that anyone who is not incarcerated will be eligible to vote, which would restore voting rights for people like me who are caught in the bureaucratic red tape of the government and our carceral system.

It's time to work towards true reintegration, and build a state where those who have completed a prison sentence are welcomed back with open arms.

HB 4 is a critical step towards this, and towards strengthening our democracy, which will always benefit from everyone having a voice.

*Randy Pruitt, OLE member who was formerly incarcerated in NM. This commentary is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.*

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## CLASSIFIEDS / CLASSIFICADOS



Rice Lake West, Inc. (Formerly Stanek Constructors, Inc.) is soliciting bids from self-certified Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Subcontractors and Suppliers for the following project:

**City of Aurora, Murphy Creek RDS & SCRS Interconnection and Delivery Vault, Project No. 5891A - Bid Date: March 27, 2023 by 2:00 p.m.**

For plans and specifications please email: [karen.calabro@rlwest.org](mailto:karen.calabro@rlwest.org) or call 303-980-8233.

**Scopes of Work include but are not limited to:** Demolition, earthwork, seeding, cast-in-place concrete, grouting, metals, fiberglass reinforced gratings, railing, & ladders, pipeline pressure testing, dampproofing, protective coatings, plumbing, HVAC, and process integration, (Electrical Subs previously prequalified).

Rice Lake West, Inc. intends to conduct negotiations in good faith with qualified SBE subcontracting and supplier firms and is willing to break up scopes of work to better fit the interests of SBE companies wishing to participate in this bid. Rice Lake West encourages larger firms to provide 2nd tier opportunities to smaller firms. For assistance with bonding, credit, or insurance, please contact Dustin Foss at 303-339-2442.

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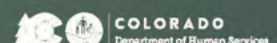
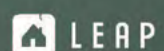
El Programa de Asistencia de Energía para Personas de Bajos Ingresos (LEAP) de Colorado ayuda a los residentes de Colorado elegibles a pagar una parte de los costos de calefacción de sus hogares para el invierno.



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Patino

Yet Congress has the power to eliminate the need for DACA altogether. Last month U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) introduced the Dream Act to secure a pathway for residency and citizenship for 2 million immigrants who came here as children. DACA was never supposed to become the status quo. It was a stopgap measure to help hundreds of thousands of young people participate in American life. Now the new Congress must show real leadership and make Dreamer protections permanent by creating an efficient process for long-time immigrants like me to formally call Arizona my home.

Our state and city leaders understand the importance of fully integrating Dreamers into society — as do 73 percent of registered voters, including both Republicans and Democrats, according to this poll. Last fall Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego and Tucson Mayor Regina Romero joined 70 mayors across the U.S. asking Congress to codify protections for Dreamers. But it's not just a symbolic act; excluding residents who've grown up in the American school system makes no economic sense. The end of DACA means that that 22,000 jobs across the nation would be lost every single month for two years. Arizona needs our contributions in industries like health care, education and construction, which are all experiencing extreme shortages. This economic reality is why Arizonans passed legislation last month making in-state tuition available for Dreamers.

Before Arizona voters passed Prop 308, I was lucky to attend college on a private scholarship. Though I studied engineering, I felt an overwhelming desire to help young people. In 2014, I joined Teach for America and spent two years teaching high school students in Avondale. Today, I work for a nonprofit that helps undocumented students access education. I do this in tribute to my beloved elementary school teachers who nurtured and supported me when I arrived in America as a scared student and didn't know English.

I've now lived in Arizona for 27 years. I graduated from Arizona schools, helped teach Arizona youth and paid Arizona taxes. I was honored to be part of the "first DACA class" nearly a decade ago, but it's demoralizing to renew my legal status in two-year increments. If the courts overturn DACA for good, that will no longer be an option. Like many of my peers with DACA, I'm approaching middle age — no longer a teen or young adult. I

can't imagine being forced back into the shadows at this point in my life or career. I yearn for real security. I want to be able to vote and put down roots as a homeowner with my fiancée.

DACA was wonderful, but we all deserve the real thing now.

*José Patino, vice president, Aliento. This commentary is republished from Arizona Mirror under a Creative Commons license.*

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[ElSemanarioOnline.com](http://ElSemanarioOnline.com)

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CLASSIFIEDS / CLASSIFICADOS

**NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
Procurement No. 2023-04

**CONTRACTED BUS SERVICES**  
**PROPOSALS DUE:** April 14, 2023, 12:00 p.m. (MST)

Proposals from individuals and firms to provide contracted bus services for the Rio Metro Regional Transit District (RMRTD) service area will be accepted until the date and time shown above at:

Rio Metro Regional Transit District  
c/o Mid-Region Council of Governments  
809 Copper N.W.  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

The RMRTD invites qualified individuals and firms to submit proposals to provide contracted bus services for the RMRTD service area. This project may be funded in part by federal and state funds. Therefore, this solicitation and resulting contract are subject to any related federal and state laws, regulations and guidelines. Interested parties may receive a complete copy of this solicitation by accessing the following websites: <http://www.riometro.org>

Questions or any correspondence related to this procurement should be submitted to Phil Pino, Procurement Officer, at [ppino@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:ppino@mrcog-nm.gov).

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**ANUNCIO DE SOLICITUD DE PROPUESTAS**  
Adquisición No. 2023-04

**CONTRATACIÓN DE SERVICIOS DE AUTOBÚS**  
**FECHA LÍMITE PARA ENTREGAR PROPUESTAS:** 14 de abril de 2023, 12:00 p.m. (MST)

Se aceptarán propuestas de individuos y empresas para proporcionar servicios de autobús contratados para el área de servicio del Distrito Regional de Tránsito de Río Metro (RMRTD) hasta la fecha y hora indicadas arriba en:

Rio Metro Regional Transit District  
c/o Mid-Region Council of Governments  
809 Copper N.W.  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

RMRTD invita a individuos y empresas calificadas a presentar propuestas para proporcionar servicios de autobús contratados para el área de servicio del RMRTD. Este proyecto puede ser financiado en parte por fondos federales y estatales. Por lo tanto, esta convocatoria y el contrato resultante están sujetos a las leyes, reglamentos y directrices federales y estatales relacionados. Las partes interesadas pueden recibir una copia completa de esta convocatoria accediendo a los siguientes sitios web: <http://www.riometro.org>

Las preguntas o cualquier correspondencia relacionada con esta contratación deberán enviarse a Phil Pino, Procurement Officer, a la dirección [ppino@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:ppino@mrcog-nm.gov).

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