

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **House and Senate Republicans call for removal of fence blockade at Roundhouse**

Santa Fe, NM- New Mexico House and Senate Republican leadership today called for the immediate removal of the fence blockade around the New Mexico State Capitol Complex. The letter requests that the Legislative Council consider readdressing security concerns that do not impose an image of antagonism against the New Mexico public. The current public health order already prevents the public from entering the Capitol building and the fence blockade only perpetuates the impression that public involvement in the legislative process is not welcome.

“The public has already been barred from entering The People’s House for going on a year, this fence just further divides the public from what is happening in Santa Fe,” said House Republican Leader Jim Townsend (Artesia). “We are spending \$33,000 a day on this blockade, with no incidents reported, and I think we can reconsider security plans that are less offensive to the public.”

“New Mexicans have endured the hardest year in a generation and they should not have their hard earned tax dollars wasted,” said Senate Republican Leader Greg Baca (Belen). “The security protocols were put in place for a threat which, thankfully, never materialized. It is now time to take down the fence and deploy resources and law enforcement to other parts of the state in need.”

As of yet, there have been no public plans to change the security protocols or remove the fence blockade at the Roundhouse.

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**NO  
TRESPASSING**



# New Mexico State Legislature

February 23, 2021

STATE CAPITOL  
Santa Fe

The Honorable Mimi Stewart  
President Pro Tempore  
NM State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 105  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

The Honorable Brian Egolf  
Speaker  
NM House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 104  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear President Pro Tem Stewart and Speaker Egolf:

We are writing to request the Legislative Council take immediate action to order the removal of the chain-link fence that is currently surrounding the Capitol Building.

While we strongly support any and all efforts to ensure the safety of the Capitol Building and the legislators and staff who have the honor of working in the Capitol, we believe the time has come to tear down the fence as the potential threat has not materialized. Maintaining the fence after any possible threat is no longer evident only creates the perception that our government leaders are afraid of our state's citizens and that there is a division between those who govern and the general public. Granted, the Capitol Building is closed to the public due to the pandemic, but the continued existence of the fence around the building just perpetuates the impression that the public is being discouraged from participating in the legislative process and that their voices are unwelcomed as the Legislature considers many important public policy issues.

If an enhanced security presence is still needed, we would be supportive of keeping the State Police officers on duty around the Capitol as they continue checking identifications and provide other needed services. However, having both the chained-linked fence and the added security presence on the Capitol grounds just seems to be an excessive reaction at a time when there is no threat.

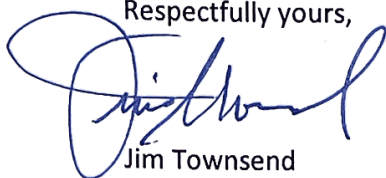
Our representative republic is based upon a compact of trust and respect between government leaders and the public and that contract should never be unnecessarily diminished by erecting physical barriers that create suspicion from those who are governed. The current fence serves no useful purpose at this point other than sending a wrong signal to all New Mexicans that their elected officials feel compelled to keep the public away from the seat of government.

In our view, it is imperative that the fence be torn down immediately and we believe the vast majority of New Mexicans would be supportive of such a decision.

Lastly, the security measures that are currently in place are not only unnecessary, but they are expensive. The cost to maintain such measures are as high as \$33,000 a day. This is a cost taxpayers should not have to bear.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully yours,



Jim Townsend



Rod Montoya



Rebecca Dow



Greg Baca



Craig Brandt



Mark Moores