



## Mayor Webber's Statement on Statues Resolution Tonight

**SANTA FE** – Tonight, I expect the Governing Body will vote on a resolution to bring two important statues into public sight: The statue of Catua and Umtua which depicts the two Native American runners who carried the dates for the Pueblo Uprising of 1680, and the statue of Don Diego de Vargas, who led the return of the Spanish to Santa Fe in 1692-93.

Both statues represent significant historical and cultural figures; both can and should be useful teaching and educational tools; both belong in safe, respectful places where they can be viewed and discussed.

Ordinarily, what I just described above would be a decision that's non-controversial—dull as dishwater. Or even a reason for community pride.

But these aren't ordinary times.

A small but vocal minority doesn't want to see the statue of the Native American runners displayed at all because, to them, the Pueblo Uprising was a bloody revolt that took the lives of hundreds of Spanish priests, women, men, and children.

A small but vocal minority doesn't want to see the statue of Don Diego de Vargas displayed because, to them, it represents the return to Santa Fe of European colonizers who perpetrated genocide on the indigenous Native American people.

And since these two opposing groups are the most vocal, with the loudest, angriest voices, they dominate the news coverage of what should be seen as a constructive, positive, and significant moment for Santa Fe.

The truth is, in most cities around the country, a constructive step like the public display of historically significant statues wouldn't be possible, precisely because of the polarizing voices that weaponize history and culture. That's not Santa Fe and that's something we should all be proud of.

Let me tell you how we got to this positive outcome.

Almost 6 months ago, I convened a group of leaders in City Hall to talk about ways we could work together to display these two important statues. At the meeting were Governors of the Pueblo of Tesuque, leaders of the Caballeros de Vargas and leaders of the Fiesta Council. Later, the Chairman of the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the executive director of the New Mexico History Museum joined in.

From the get-go, the folks in attendance agreed on several basic understandings.

First, both statues needed to be brought out for public viewing. Both statues are part of our history. They deserve respect and they can be important in teaching and appreciating the history of Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico.

Second, neither statue could be placed outside. The two runners were originally supposed to go in the Convention Center courtyard; the statue of Don Diego had previously been placed in Cathedral Park. Everyone agreed that—unfortunately—it wouldn't be safe to place these statues outside, where they could be vandalized.

Third, both statues should be accorded equal treatment and equal recognition. Both need to be displayed safely, securely, and respectfully. Both need to encourage historical dialog and education. Both should be placed in their new locations at the same time, to the best of our ability.

Now, after months of constructive conversation, we have an agreement, to be voted on by the Governing Body.

Preliminary discussions have already started with the School District and the History Museum on how best to bring students to view the statues and to learn about and discuss our deep, unique, and complex history.

I wish everyone in Santa Fe could have witnessed the meetings that took place in the Mayor's Office. Every discussion was respectful, cordial, and positive. Of course, there wasn't immediate agreement. But there were shared values that kept the discussions moving forward to eventual agreement. And that's what counts.

I want to express my gratitude to the leaders who came together to make this agreement happen.

Thank you to Governors Milton Herrera, Mark Mitchell and Charlie Dorame, Chairman James Mountain, President Gary Delgado, President Krystle Lucero, and Executive Director Billy Garrett. We owe them recognition and appreciation.

I also want to thank Councilors Michael Garcia, Carol Romero-Wirth, and Pilar Faulkner for co-sponsoring this resolution. That simple act also took courage and leadership, and they deserve to be recognized for showing both of those attributes.

This may be a small step forward, but it's an important one. It doesn't do away with divisions, but it does show that progress is possible when people of goodwill and good hearts work together.

Here in Santa Fe, we can show respect for each and respect for all. And that's no small thing.