My View Ahtza Chavez and Melanie Aranda

**Now is the time to open new doors**

* By Ahtza Chavez and Melanie Aranda
* Sunday, June 11, 2022
* <https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/now-is-the-time-to-open-new-doors/article_3f5d7998-e843-11ec-bf7c-371ca4729a59.html>

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Can you imagine a New Mexico summer where the pages of this newspaper aren’t dominated by news of devastating climate change-fueled wildfires ripping through our communities and forests? We can.

Our reality is that the climate crisis is already here and causing harm. Burning fossil fuels at the expense of our climate, environment and health to pursue economic growth without considering the costs for the last century got us here.

It doesn’t have to be this way. We can choose to confront the climate crisis and open new doors to an economy where all communities thrive, and New Mexico’s air, land, water and wildlife are protected.

After 100 years of overdependence on fossil fuels, our environment, health and economy are suffering. New Mexico ranks 50th in child well-being and 50th in education. One in 5 New Mexican children faces hunger. Prolonged drought, increased heat and wildfire threaten our air, land, water and wildlife.

We can see the tragic consequences of this in the numerous communities impacted by the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, from loss of homes to degraded air quality, and more. The boom and bust of a fossil-fueled economy prevent our ability to make investments to improve the well-being of our state.

These realities point to a truth that my neighbors and our communities across New Mexico have been saying for years. New Mexicans want safe neighborhoods, good schools and jobs with opportunities to advance. Respecting our diversity, traditions and each other — and instilling those values in the next generation — is critical to ensuring our state thrives.

An equitable economic transition to a renewable energy economy will support communities with the tools to identify a path forward that works for them.

We need solutions that simultaneously address New Mexicans’ climate and economic crises and that bring more equity and justice to our energy-based economy.

Our climate and environment, jobs and economy, and health are inextricably linked — every policy choice that impacts one impacts the others.

For too long, oil and gas lobbyists and the elected officials that shield them have spoken for us by continuing to double down on a fossil-fueled economy at the expense of so much that we hold dear.

This is what “open new doors” is all about. On the newly launched Open New Doors website (opennewdoorsnm.org), created in partnership with CAVU, the Center for Civic Policy, NAVA Education Project, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and the Western Environmental Law Center, New Mexicans from all over the state will have a place to share their vision for creating both a thriving economy and a healthy climate.

We reject the false choice that we must somehow choose between them.

Now is the time we speak up with one voice, together, and fearlessly proclaim that opening new doors for New Mexico means centering equity and justice in a transition away from fossil fuels and the industry’s climate-damaging and health-harming pollution.

By lifting our collective voices, we call on our decision-makers to heed the warnings our planet is giving us and build an economy that reflects New Mexicans’ values. Sign the pledge or share your own story at [OpenNewDoorsNM.org](http://OpenNewDoorsNM.org).

*This was written by NAVA Education Project Executive Director Ahtza Chavez and Center for Civic Policy Chief Operating Officer Melanie Aranda on behalf of the Open New Doors steering committee.* [*OpenNewDoorsNM.org*](http://OpenNewDoorsNM.org) *is a project centered on the urgent need for a managed, just and equitable transition away from an overdependence on oil and gas revenues to address the climate emergency.*