



Ariel Dougherty

1580 Caballo Road  
Truth or Consequences

New Mexico 87901-3013

575-740-5868 (mobile)

[ArielCamera@gmail.com](mailto:ArielCamera@gmail.com)

[www.arieldougherty.com](http://www.arieldougherty.com)

[www.scriobd/arieldougherty](http://www.scriobd/arieldougherty)

@MediaEquity

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Xochitl Torres Small  
Congressperson-Elect  
PO Box 2250  
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88004

Dear Xochitl Torres Small,

A super congratulations. You won! You held on, waiting until every vote was counted! I am so proud and honored to have you as my new Representative in the House in Washington.

Your victory, to me is **a first**, in that the oil&gas sector has controlled the 2nd congressional district since it's inception. You represent the switch to renewable energies, which in New Mexico are just as an important natural resources as oil or gas, *but not a threat* to the globe's climate.

Maybe most exciting is you have a large sisterhood of freshman representatives joining you in this very historic and significant moment in U.S. history. Not the least of whom is Deb Haaland, of NM01, also joining the all Democratic NM delegation to Congress. I envision, and celebrate, the joy you will all have embracing one another and protecting one another backs as you struggle on behalf of your collective constituencies for justice on its many fronts.

While I know you already hold a long list of tasks to accomplish, I outline five major areas of concern, that I think are significant for our district, New Mexico and the nation:

- 1) **Voting rights, suppression and need of reform.** I've a neighbor who went to vote, but was told she wasn't registered, even though she'd voted a few years back. Someone doing part-time work for me had just moved from Albuquerque to Truth or Consequences asked too late about how to change her registration and could not be released from her work to vote in Albuquerque. These are modest examples, in comparison to massive voter suppression in Georgia and elsewhere, like North Dakota. Serious re-examination and updating of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 needs to be done. Today's unfair, unwieldiness of the electoral college needs massive change. Gerrymandering must be addressed.
- 2) **Protect and enhance Natural Resources.** As a water attorney you know this area far better than I. With the recent Climate report by the UN we do not have many years to fix this problem. It is huge and dire. Make all food packaging bio-degradable. Maybe then when US Navy aircraft carriers go to sea they won't be dumping massive amounts of toxic plastics into the oceans. The list is too large to enumerate here. Many experts exist to assist in the most pressing areas.

- 3) **Media justice, media reform and media literacy.** This is maybe not on most top five lists. But given the current president's persistent rhetoric on “fake news” and the catastrophic inability of corporate media to counter such “misinformation” our democracy is at stake. While the First Amendment protects “free speech”, Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights protects our right *to both receive and disseminate information*. The public's access to information is paramount in confronting and solving all the other issues that are before us. I am something of an expert in this area. But there are many others. Nan Rubin, now in Las Cruces, helped to start [KTAL community radio](#). Malkia Devich Cyril, founder of Center for Media Justice (Oakland – CA-13 Barbara Lee), created the national [Media Action Grassroots Network](#). In Detroit (MI- 13 Rashida Tlaib) the [Allied Media Project](#) holds an annual conference that brings a broad community of media makers together. They are also fantastic leaders in their local community. New York City has too many media justice organizations to list. But I will mention [Women's Studio Workshop](#) located in the Hudson Valley (NY-19 Antonio Delgado). A pre-conference I lead at Allied Media's Conference in 2009 underscored the inter-relationship between the arts and media. The short is, I urge members of the House of Representatives to hold hearings on the media with a large representation of grassroots media makers not just corporate big wigs. Representation in media and media justice are central concerns. Issues of too much consolidation, lack of broad reach especially into rural areas, media ownership and how it curbs presentation of a variety of viewpoints (i.e. Las Cruces movie theatres that you & I discussed briefly on our first meeting), massive manipulation through social media, and so much more. Frankly, it is a very complicated issue with many layers. But it needs to be tackled and addressed in the name of democracy. The Presidents' attack at his news conference the day after the election of three women of color reporters, April Ryan, Abby Phillip, Yamiche Alcindor, and CNN's Jim Acosta was a blatant misuse of his “bully pulpit” spewing racism and misogyny. You and fellow/sister Congresspeople need to stand up and protect a free press and vibrant media culture. Getting testimony from the base, a whole host of media activists, academics and journalists will go a long way in restoring respect for a diverse media whose primary mission is to accurately inform the public and foster a flourishing public discussion about civic affairs. It is through a vibrant and open media that we celebrate our rich and diverse cultures!
- 4) **Enhance the Quality of Life for All Americans :** This umbrella a large number of quality of life issues from housing to education; healthcare to senior concerns; the food supply to cultural efforts. The population of our country is aging. By 2025 the senior population is expected to increase by 80%. By 2030 in New Mexico seniors will be 30% of the population. Already in Sierra County seniors are 40% of the population. This phenomenon demands rethinking of services and programs, residences and cities, healthcare and transportation. I've no easy solutions. But I hope for visionaries and experts in these fields to step up with an expanded consciousness and a broad quality of life perspective with an interlocking

series of steps that jointly tackled these concerns.

- 5) **Economic justice** : It is fantastic that \$15 an hour efforts are succeeding. It is criminal the federal minimum wages remains stuck at \$7.25. NM02 has lower incomes than workers in the other two districts. Why? Poverty holds back innovation and effects quality of life at all levels. Maybe it is time for a guaranteed annual income that alto refresch and recharge. Community prosperity really only comes when none of its people are facing econmic hardships. The number one cause of bankruptcy – medical bills – need their day of reckoning. A vast and critical overhaul of the medical system and its financing needs addressing. Can universal healthcare solve this? It should, but will it? Only if we all step up to demand it.

In the first 100 days or the whole of your term in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress you will not be able to accomplish all this. But you can provide a new direction, start to make a dent, put your foot down to say the retrograde CAFE standards proposed by current EPA administrators is unacceptable.

You take the lead. We have your back. Happy and safe travels to your new job!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ariel Dougherty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Ariel Dougherty