



Brian Colón
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
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Welcome friends, family and colleagues, I'm Brian Colón and it is an honor to stand before you this evening.

I know your time is precious and I can't thank you enough for being with us tonight. I am humbled by this great attendance.

Aleli, my beautiful bride, and Rafael, my wonderful son, thank you both because without your love and patience, none of this would be possible. Mom, thank you for extending your visit here to New Mexico all the way from the Philippines so you could share this special evening with all of us tonight.

For those of you who do not know, I am a New Mexico Democrat – and proud of it. From a very early age, I have felt a call to service. Today, the journey begins.

Three years ago I proposed a thirty-three county strategy to elect Democrats up and down the ballot in each and every part of our state and I'm happy to say that we succeeded. We made New Mexico a blue state in '08. Join this campaign for Lt. Governor, because we're going to go to every county in every corner of this state to talk about Democratic values.

We're going to let the voters know that we believe in them and we're going to let them know that we're going to change the state.

As Democrats, we believe that every person deserves access to affordable health care. As Democrats, we believe that every child should receive high-quality education to prepare them for the future, that all people are entitled to equal rights in the eyes of the law, that hard work should be rewarded with a decent living wage. As Democrats, we believe that our leaders must be accountable and ethical. That is why I am a Democrat. That is why I am running for Lt. Governor.

I stand before you today as someone who believes in these values because they are right and because I am a product of them. These are values founded in the progressive ideals of great Democrats such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Kennedy brothers, and our President, Barack Obama.

I think it's appropriate to reflect on the passing of a great American. Senator Kennedy's devotion to, and passion for, public service was an inspiration to me and to many of you here tonight.

I'll go to work for New Mexicans, no matter their station in life, young and old, voters, and non-voters alike: we will treat each and every New Mexican with the dignity and respect they deserve.

As a child, I saw how progressive ideals impacted lives. I can recall as a young child standing in line with my mom and dad for powdered milk and a block of cheese. Though people have criticized these programs and called them handouts, my family called them survival.

Democratic programs like these helped my family and others to survive. It was Democratic programs such as Section 8 public housing that allowed my parents to put a roof over my head. It was Democratic programs that provided low-cost loans so I could afford to be the first in my family to go to college. It was the Democrats' fight for civil rights that allowed me, as a Hispanic, to vote for the country's first African-American President.

Today, values are at the center of the debate when we ask ourselves 'how we can afford to provide health care to everyone?' My answer is 'How can we afford not to?'

Ladies and gentlemen, I was 19 years old when I watched my father's health deteriorate until he ultimately passed at the young age of 49. He died from the devastating effects of muscular dystrophy. If not for Medicaid and the Muscular Dystrophy Association, I believe his life would have been more painful and far shorter. As your Lt. Governor, I will fight to ensure that every New Mexican has the health care they need.

Let me tell you about a young man, Chris Ortega of Santa Fe. Chris approached me last week after I finished speaking to a group of business leaders. He listened-in while he was waiting tables. He had the courage to stop me as I was leaving the restaurant and he told me that he was inspired by my words.

He told me how his parents are facing the same struggles that mine did so many years ago. His father is a diabetic with kidney disease and who requires constant dialysis and his mother works 10-to-12 hour days in a bakery just to hold on to the house that they may ultimately lose.

Ladies and gentlemen that's not the healthcare that we deserve. It's not the healthcare that Chris' parents deserve. Chris, you've inspired me. Thank you for being with us this evening. We're going to work each and every day to win this race for you, and for so many others like you.

We will make a difference from Farmington to Las Cruces, from Clayton to Espanola and in communities across New Mexico. Make no mistake about it - our campaign believes that affordable, high-quality health care must be a right, not a privilege.

The same holds true for a first-class education. I was one of those kids who benefited from free meals at Los Lunas schools. Not being hungry allowed me to focus on learning. It allowed me to 'listen' while my teachers worked hard to ensure that their students learned. Admittedly, sometimes I listened and sometimes I didn't - like any young person in the classroom.

Thankfully, teachers like Ms. Pam Cordova, who is also with us tonight, pushed me, pushed me harder than I thought I could be pushed to succeed in the classroom. Twenty-five years later, I can absolutely say that her fingerprints are evident in any success that I enjoy now or may enjoy in the future.

So tonight, to all the teachers who make a difference in their student's lives - teachers like my bride Aleli - thank you. If it wasn't for your hard work and dedication, I wouldn't be here tonight.

That's why I am saddened by the latest statistics that show our dropout rate at 47%. We are losing half of our kids. That means half of my son's class won't finish high school and that is unacceptable.

If New Mexico will lead in the "new" economy, we must have a workforce that is prepared for new challenges. We must all sit down, business leaders, educators, students, parents, community members and elected officials to work together to transform our educational system once and for all.

From the film industry to the spaceport in southern New Mexico, to the development of affordable renewable energy resources, New Mexico is

leading the charge on the national stage. We must focus, we must participate, and we must engage, to thrive in the new economy. As New Mexico moves to become a leader in this new economy, let me assure you that labor will have a seat at the table. It is labor that fights for a fair and decent wage, for a safe work environment, for better health care, and it is labor that ensures we have a strong middle class in New Mexico.

On my drive over here this afternoon, I was reminded of just how beautiful New Mexico is. Nowhere in the world are there such pristine sunsets. Our environment is one of our most precious assets. I will work to protect our streams and lakes, ensure our forests are preserved, and that our air is clean for future generations. We'll do all of this, and at the same time we'll create high-wage, high-energy, and high-skill jobs. Democrats have always been the stewards of the land, and I will fight to ensure that my son and your children – and their children – all enjoy the natural beauty of New Mexico.

I have talked about our Democratic values. At the end of the day, however, they're all American values. Keeping our loved ones healthy, fed, educated and employed is simply American...

Speaking of American values, let us not forget the sacrifices of men and women who have served in uniform. We will never forget your courage and we will always honor your service. Thank you to the men and women of our armed forces.

This beautiful state belongs to all New Mexicans and so does this campaign. It belongs to the parents who push their children every night to finish their homework because we value education. It belongs to the farmer who conserves his resources every season to make ends meet and to the many young people who will come home in uniform as veterans and use the new G.I. Bill to earn a college degree. It belongs to the student on the reservation who dreams of going to medical school because she knows how badly her people need healthcare. That's who this campaign belongs to.

I have listened to your hopes, your dreams, and your struggles. You are the reason we are here today. My life has never been about holding office – it has always been about making peoples' lives better. Tonight I stand here and humbly ask you to join us. Join us and let's bring new ideas and new leadership to the State of New Mexico.