

Email

laceyj8r@gmail.com

Comments:

Good Afternoon Commissioners. I understand that an agenda item for your Commission Meeting is a proposal to cut the Sandoval County 4-H Extension and Jemez Valley Canning budget by 30%. I ask you all to please, stop for a minute, and reconsider doing this. Both of these programs are a huge asset to our very diverse County, and I feel that cutting their budget by such a massive amount would be detrimental to our residents and also to the participants of its program.

The 4-H extension programs reach is not just for us to hold a County Fair each year. It is so much more. Throughout the year, our Extension Agents provide opportunities and support to a group of committed, optimistic, and self-driven set of young adults that are looking to build character traits that will last a lifetime. Steve and Nicole have had to make sacrifices throughout the past couple of years that include fundraising and seeking funds to improve our County Fairgrounds on their own, leave their office space, and be relocated to an area that does not even permit them to hold any meetings. Extension agent Steve Lucero has procured over \$150,000 for the livestock barns at the fairgrounds that our youth use every year.

I understand that with the cancellation of the County Fair the perception would be that 4-H and Extension services are on hold. That is completely false. In fact, not only have extension services continued, they have had to rethink ways to keep the 4-Hers engaged during this pandemic. Their workload has doubled, and both Steve and Nicole have completely risen to the challenge. Providing virtual projects to participate in, staying in touch with all participants and interacting on a one on one basis. Our county 4-H program is unique. Our extension agents work with Native American youth, providing opportunities for them to succeed in an agricultural environment that they probably would not have access to if there hadn't been an extension service provided. With this shutdown, Steve and Nicole have had to get creative in assisting the Navajo Nation, however, they have prevailed in this area, and with their assistance, many of these youth will still be participating in our Virtual County Fair this year. With such a large cut in the budget, who knows what services will even be available to the Navajo Nation in the future.

Budget cuts during this pandemic seem to be a necessary evil, but I ask you, I beg you, please reconsider this aggressive cut to our Extension services. A 30% budget cut is asking to have our 4-H agents work with one hand tied behind their back and blindfolded. I ask of you to please support this youth group with as much reverence as you do the other youth programs in Sandoval county that supports at-risk youth. 4-H produces successful, educated, and hard-working young adults that contribute to our society in a positive manner, they are our future. Please do not cut the budget for the program that aids them in becoming our future leaders of America. In such a time of uncertainty, please continue to support the consistent program of 4-H, they are a constant regardless of a pandemic, shut-down, whatever it may be, agriculture never stops. Our Extension Services have not slowed down. We want to keep our extension agents, please do not chase them away with this budget cut. Our children trust Steve and Nicole, we do not want to lose them.