



**Remarks by Regina Romero
Tribute to Mayors Series**

January 26, 2021

Regina Romero: *Muchisimas gracias*, Mayor Villaraigosa. What an honor it is to be here receiving the award by your name. It's wonderful to have these kind remarks coming from you. And this is a humbling recognition. As Latinos, it's important that we remember that we stand on the shoulders of leaders who have paved the way for our community. Mayor Villaraigosa's dedication to public service and empowering marginalized voices serves as an example to all of us.

Another one of these leaders is my good friend, the chairman of the Latino Leaders Network, the Honorable Mickey Ibarra. Mickey was kind enough to invite me to last year's program just after I had won my election in Tucson, and was still getting my feet wet as mayor. He was kind enough to include me in the program for last year's dinner. And I am equally humbled today for him and the board to have selected me with this complete honor. I'm grateful for his leadership, his

friendship and for all of the amazing work he's done and continues to do through the Latino Leaders Network.

In addition, I want to thank my fellow mayors, Mayor Suarez and Mayor Fischer for their service in leading the U.S. Conference of Mayors. I cannot wait to share the stage later on today with my two heroes, Janet Murguia of Unidos USA and Maria Elena Salinas for our panel discussion. It's truly an honor to be here with you this afternoon. As Latinos, it is critical that we support one another as we break barriers and enter spaces that others may not be used to seeing us in, whether that be in elected office, or in the private sector.

I am the daughter of immigrants. I am the daughter of immigrants. I remember this every single day, the youngest of six children, and the only one in my family born in the U.S. My dad was an honest and hardworking man and a proud member of the United Farm Workers. Mom taught us how to be kind and serve others.

I grew up in a farm working community of Somerton, Arizona. From a young age, I was taught the importance of civic engagement. When I turned 18, I moved to Tucson and registered to vote. My father told me that my vote really represented the voices of our entire family since I was the only citizen at that time. I first got involved in the political process because I wanted to see more voices like mine represented at the decision

making table. I started participating in voter registration drives while attending the University of Arizona.

Soon after, I met my future husband volunteering for a council candidate, whose seat I would eventually run for. I've organized; I've marched; I've rallied for many campaigns and causes over the last 25 years. About a year after I had my first child, a seat opened on the Tucson City Council. Dozens of friends and community members reached out to encourage me to run including my husband, who promised me to take care of our baby. And that he has. At first I was hesitant, but then I realized, if not me, then who? So I ran and won in 2007 and served on the Tucson City Council until 2019 when I decided to run for mayor. Despite Tucson being 45 percent Latino, we had not seen a Mexican American mayor since the late 1800s when Arizona was still a territory.

In December of 2019, I became the second Mexican American mayor, the first woman and first Latina mayor of the city of Tucson. Soon after I took office, Tucson and the entire nation was confronted with enormous challenges from the pandemic and systemic racial injustice, to economic instability that has disproportionately affected Latinos and people of color. But for all of the hurdles that 2020 threw our way, we have proven our resilience.

Just in the first hours of the Biden-Harris administration, we saw immediate actions taken to not just undo the damage, but move our country forward. The president's executive actions on immigration are so personal to so many of us, especially here on the borderlands, just ten years after SB 1070. His message of unity and vision for an inclusive America is precisely what our country needs during these divisive times.

President Biden has nominated the most diverse cabinet the White House has ever seen, including our colleague mayors Buttigieg and Walsh to get the job done. And we have made history with the first black, Asian American, and woman vice president who is the proud daughter of immigrants. Make no mistake. The challenges we face are immense. The pandemic, racism, sexism, economic inequality, a denial of science and truth, and the promotion of lies remain obstacles to moving our democracy forward.

Every day I wake up, my intention is to make my community a place with opportunity for all. I know that mayors across the country as well as the leaders in this virtual room are striving to realize the same goal in their communities too. It is our collective dedication to creating a more just, sustainable and prosperous America that empowers each and every one of us. That makes me so hopeful for our future. Thank you again to the event sponsors, to Mayor Villaraigosa, Chairman Ibarra, and the

Latino Leaders Network for this award and the opportunity to share my story with you. I'm humbled.