

STATEMENT OF U.S. ATTORNEY GREG FOURATT on the Sentencing of Manny Aragon

When this chapter of New Mexico's history is written, whether Manny Aragon is described as the godfather of public corruption remains to be seen. But what we can all agree on is that the day on which he stood before the State Senate first as its President Pro Tem and later as its Majority Leader and lent his considerable support to legislation he knew included millions of dollars that he intended to *steal* was a low point in the history of state government. It is hard to imagine there is anything worse for New Mexico's business climate than a national reputation for having prominent political figures and their connected cronies demanding kickbacks and political contributions for lucrative state business. That is why this case was so important.

The sentencing consequences for Mr. Aragon that were imposed today were severe, and properly so. He already has forfeited \$662,000 to the United States government. Today, he was ordered to repay the State of New Mexico \$1,190,542 in restitution. He was also fined \$87,316. That's a total of more than \$1.9 million that has been disgorged from him. Although that is a significant sum, it is an amount that Mr. Aragon could pay *today*. Perhaps most important, however, Mr. Aragon soon will begin serving a 67-month prison sentence. Based on the treachery and contempt he showed toward the taxpayers of this state – especially those for whom he was a role model and a beacon of hope – prison is where he belongs.

The citizens of New Mexico can take comfort in knowing that the vast majority of public officials across this state are decent, conscientious, and law-abiding persons who hold dear the public's trust. To any who would breach that trust, to any who struggle against the impulse to steal, and to any who are tempted to use taxpayer coffers as their personal piggybank, they have no business being in government. In the wake of the Treasurer's Office corruption case, the Insurance Division corruption case, and now the Metro Court corruption case, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the state Attorney General's Office, and the FBI are hopeful that the era of picking the taxpayers' pockets is at an end and that a new era rededicated to transparency, honest service, and fair play has begun.