

TCCC Position Paper: Whitten Inn-LULAC Dispute October 2009

The Taos County Chamber of Commerce's Mission Statement states that it "*exists for the sole purpose of advancing our community's business, agricultural and commercial sectors.*" Its sole interest lies in the economic well-being of our vibrant tri-cultural business community. We feel that the current media focus on the conflict between the Whitten Inn and its employees is damaging to both the reputation of our community as a tourism destination and a community with a historical commitment to "fair employment."

As Directors of the Taos County Chamber of Commerce, we see it as our duty to offer our services for responsible mediation and an ultimate resolution of this unfortunate public dispute. We have attempted to privately encourage the parties to seek mediation, as that has not been successful we hope a more public appeal will achieve the desired result.

The public escalation of this dispute will inevitably affect all Taos tourism-related business, and could ultimately negatively affect our community's share of already dwindling Gross Receipts and Lodgers Tax revenue. Furthermore, continued negative national media coverage, will damage the carefully crafted image in which our community leadership has invested so many of our tax dollars. It ultimately will affect the private economy of every single taxpayer and business, large and small, in Taos.

Our Board of Directors therefore, formally invites the contending parties, in the spirit of economic and cultural goodwill to which this Chamber of Commerce is committed, to participate in private discussions we propose to host. The TCCC, by way of this Position Paper, formally makes available all of its facilities, and offers to bear the full costs of, a fair and unbiased, private, mediation process – hearing all grievances without pre-judgment – by experienced professionals, for the purpose of arriving at a mutually satisfactory conclusion to this conflict, and a resumption of positive media coverage of Taos as a unique tourism destination.