

"No Excuses" Declares Challenger To Mayor Keller; Mayling Armijo Says "Crime Out Of Control; Time To Stop Coddling Criminals," Calls For Giving Police More "Resources" APD DWI Scandal Gets No Mention

Wednesday, February 05, 2025



Mayling Armijo

The newest candidate in the ABQ mayoral race immediately went to work on Mayor Tim Keller's soft spot, condemning the city's continuing high crime and homelessness and putting the blame squarely on the shoulders of the two-term incumbent.

Mayling Armijo, a former director of the Bernalillo County Economic Development Office with close ties to former Republican County Commissioner Wayne Johnson, is thus far the only officially announced Keller challenger.

Armijo declared her entry Tuesday at a downtown coffee bar:

Crime is out of control. . .we deserve better. If you commit a crime in ABQ there will be consequences and, yes, criminals will go to jail. No excuses. It's time to get serious about solutions and restore accountability.

Notably, Armijo, an ABQ native, gave a strong vote of confidence to APD even as it is mired in the worst corruption scandal in its history. She told supporters and reporters:

I understand what it means to wear a uniform. As a (Navy) veteran I know the sacrifices and responsibilities. It's time allow our police to do their job effectively and safely, giving them the resources and supporting their goal of a safer city.

Armijo, who describes herself as a "proud daughter of an immigrant and a Hispanic veteran small business owner," scored the Keller administration over the homeless problem:

Homelessness is a public health crisis not a housing crisis. . .fueled by addiction and worsened by failed leadership. Resources are thrown at the problem with no measurable results.



Joe Monahan

And on drugs:

The current administration has not made any progress in the last eight years. . . We need true health treatment and counseling for individuals who suffer from drug addiction or mental illness. A Keller operative responded:

What? She doesn't like the Gateway Center, the first entry into the public health arena the city has ever made? Where was she on behavioral health when Bernalillo County passed a behavioral tax and they could not move the money out the door? The city approved a tax hike and put it to work. Mayling

After her formal announcement Armijo fully embraced a vigorous tough on crime platform in an interview with KKOB radio and their mainly conservative audience, indicating again that she will not be romancing the city's progressives in the November election.

THE ARMIJO FILE

Armijo, 48, a registered Democrat who, if elected, would be the first woman mayor, is making her maiden bid for public office.

We blogged January 15 about Armijo's ties to private developers, anticipating her entry into the race.

Armijo has also served as Deputy County Manager for Sandoval County (under Manager Wayne Johnson) and is currently the Executive Director of Elevated Lending CDC which specializes "in SBA 504 loans, bringing federal funding directly to local businesses. Our personalized approach ensures that every entrepreneur receives expert guidance and tailored financial solutions."

The mayoral race is officially nonpartisan but Armijo's ties to Johnson who ran and lost against Keller in 2017 were seized on by Democrats to push her to the Republican right. They pointed out that Johnson's wife, Kurstin Johnson, ran unsuccessfully for the state Senate last year and is a prominent in ABQ real estate.

Armijo's backers says she also worked in economic development under Dem Gov. Richardson. Armijo has filed as a privately financed candidate and will not try to qualify for public financing. Keller, 47, will again pursue public financing for his campaign.

He has the organization to get the many small donations needed to qualify for \$755,000 in public money.

As in the past, a separate political committee apart from the campaign is expected and that could push his total funding to over \$1 million. That is a high hurdle for Armijo or any challenger to jump.

Keller is seeking an unprecedented third consecutive term. Fatigue and frustration with crime are palpable but so is an air of apathy that may be keeping professional politicians on the sidelines.

In the early going a pattern is forming that was seen when Keller won re-election in 2021 when two conservative candidates--former Sheriff Manny Gonzales and radio talk host Eddy Aragon--ran against Keller and split the conservative vote. Democrat Keller managed to get well over 50 percent and avoided a run-off election.

This time Aragon says he's running again but has not yet made an official declaration with the city.

And for another dose of deja vu, former BernCo Sheriff Darren White is said to be eyeing a run. If both get in that could set up another split of the conservative vote and again ease Keller's path.

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