



NEW MEXICO BUSINESS COALITION

Q1

Candidate Name:

Renee Grout

Q2

For what City Council District are you running?

9

Q3

How long have you lived in the District you're running for?

48 years

Q4

Email address where voters can reach you:

reneefordistrict9@gmail.com

Q5

Phone number where voters can reach you:

505-440-2550

Q6

Other Information

Campaign Website

vote.reneegrout.com

Social Media

Re-elect Renee Grout for Council District 9

Q7

If elected, what would be your first priority as a City Councilor?

My first priority will always be supporting children and families. Everything I've done as a city councilor in the last 3 1/2 years, from encouraging the creation of good jobs to my work on crime and homelessness, goes back to making Albuquerque a great place to live, work, and raise a family. That starts with ensuring the public safety of every citizen in Albuquerque.

Q8

What would you do to streamline permitting and other government red tape in order to attract new business to Albuquerque?

As a small business owner, I understand how important it is to cut unnecessary red tape so our local small businesses can grow and so we can attract business to the city. I supported creating an Office of Permitting in the Planning Department to help streamline the process. I would also like to see the Department conduct a salary study on all Inspector positions. These positions are always short-staffed, and the salaries seem low to me given the amount of knowledge and experience needed. I would also like to revisit the FasTrax system. Construction permits have gotten so backed up that developers feel like they have to use FasTrax or else their projects will never get reviewed. This amounts to a back-door tax.

the progressives on the City Council need to stop treating our local business owners like an enemy, with their punishing regulations. I have pushed back on rent control and other regulations championed by the progressives. They never have the intended effect they tout, rather they end up punishing hardworking people who invest their lives and life savings into their businesses and the workers at these businesses.

Q9

What specifically would you do to reduce crime in ABQ and help ensure citizen safety?

I will always support any initiative that adds officers to our police force. Until that happens, I support adding technology like Shot Spotters, drones, and security cameras to multiply our forces. I've helped maximize our available officers by asking the Chief of Police to double the Foothills Area Command's Proactive Response Team from three officers to six. These officers know the community deeply and recognize every homeless person. Their emphasis on community policing has become a model for other area commands in Albuquerque, and officers from other parts of the city commonly rotate onto the team for training. The Albuquerque Community Safety Department has also become a force multiplier for our police by taking calls for welfare checks, domestic violence follow-ups, and down-and-outs. This has freed up our sworn officers for other calls.

Q10

What policies would you enact or repeal to ensure ABQ is more business-friendly?

The first thing I would do is get rid of Project Labor Agreements, which require union labor for City building projects over \$10 million. I am in full support of unions. However, requiring a certain amount of union labor has reduced the ability of local businesses to compete for municipal projects. Instead of keeping taxpayer dollars spent on these projects in our community, these projects are tending to go to large out-of-state contractors who can bring in enough union labor to fill the quota. When I and four other Councilors passed a law that would remove the PLA requirement, it was vetoed by Mayor Keller and we didn't have enough votes to override his veto.

Q11

Regarding the growing homeless situation, what is your plan as a City Councilor to address the needs of this population while better protecting safety of law abiding citizens?

I believe that we need to be compassionate, but at the same time we must set boundaries. Unhoused people are not allowed to take over parks and other public spaces or destroy property, and we must be strong about that. We should provide help for those who are in need, but those who reject our help and choose to break our laws must be held accountable to protect the public and our quality of life.

I created a new Public Camping Ordinance to clearly define what camping is and clarify where camping is allowed (campgrounds and Safe Outdoor Spaces), and where it is not allowed (anywhere else). I also revised the Parks Ordinance to make it clear that playgrounds are for children to play on, not for people to sleep under. The clarity provided in these laws has made it easier for our police officers to enforce illegal camping.

Simply shuffling people around hasn't solved the problem. I have worked to address youth homelessness by pushing for the construction of a dedicated center for unhoused young adults with age-appropriate services. I believe that addressing the needs of young people at this critical time in their lives will prevent future homelessness by helping them get on their feet before they become exploited and hardened. This advocacy led to my work on raising awareness of human trafficking in our community.

I also recently introduced a Sobriety-Based Housing Voucher program to give a leg up to people who are ready to change their lives and commit to drug-free living. The Resolution directs the Health, Housing, and Homelessness Department to develop a pilot program for 25 unhoused people who are exiting rehab and are committed to living a sober lifestyle. The program will give these people 12 months of housing plus supportive services while they get back on their feet. The New Mexico Apartment Association has endorsed the concept, as people exiting homelessness who are committed to sober living will be more successful as renters.

Q12

While some say ABQ is immigrant-friendly, in practice it is a 'Sanctuary City'. That designation could cause the loss of some federal funding. Do you support or oppose ABQ's current Sanctuary City Status? Please explain your answer.

Oppose,

Additional Comments::

I am proud that Albuquerque is friendly to immigrants. My own grandparents came here from Lebanon to build a good life for themselves and their family, and I support anyone who comes here through the proper channels. But it's short-sighted and foolish to block federal authorities from accessing our Prisoner Transport Center. It's not APD's job to enforce federal law; our community needs ICE to do its job. Anyone who comes here to live and works welcome to stay. But anyone who commits a crime, or is here to traffic in drugs or human beings is not welcome, period. Anyone caught terrorizing our community should be brought to justice, and then removed from the country. Councilor Bassan and I tried to remove the prohibition on ICE access to the Prisoner Transport Center two years ago and failed by one vote. If we allow ICE into the Prisoner Transport Center where criminals are booked, then ICE will not need to go searching for these criminals in neighborhoods and businesses. This is the same policy President Obama asked the City of Albuquerque to implement in 2009 and Mayor Berry did just that. Unfortunately, Mayor Keller undid this common-sense, bipartisan policy.

Q13

What measures will you take as Councilor to deal with illegal encampments in the city?

I created a new Public Camping Ordinance to clearly define what camping is and clarify where camping is and is not allowed. I also revised the Parks Ordinance to make it clear that playgrounds are for children to play on, not for people to sleep under. The clarity provided in these laws has made it easier for our police officers to enforce illegal camping. I also supported renovating the West Side Shelter and increasing security so people have a safe place to go.

I will do everything I can to support substance abuse treatment and mental health treatment. The state also needs to step up; I've supported and lobbied for a new state-run mental hospital in Albuquerque as a member of the Homeless Coordinating Council.

I worked with neighbors and advocates for the unhoused on IDO amendments that made Safe Outdoor Spaces legal. What I will NOT do is relax the requirements for safety and sanitation to make it "easier" to establish a Safe Outdoor Space. Those requirements are sensible and help keep these spaces from destroying our communities. What happened at Coronado Park and what's happening now at the Quirky Bookstore at Jefferson and Central are examples of what encampments without these safeguards are like. They're inhumane and hurt the surrounding neighborhood.

Q14

Relating to 2nd Amendment rights, do you support or oppose city ordinances or laws that would outlaw high-capacity magazines and/or certain semi-automatic weapons? Please explain your answer.

Any new law in our city should be enforceable, and any City Ordinance relating to gun control would be unenforceable under the state and federal constitutions. I strongly oppose any attempt at gun control and gun bans under municipal law and am a proud supporter of the 2nd Amendment.

Q15

Do you support or oppose city mandates regarding employer/employee relations, such as minimum wage, paid time off policies ...etc.? Please explain your answer.

Additional Comments::

These mandates are the wrong approach. Instead, we should be helping our local businesses grow and prosper. I am the owner of a small business and I know that people put their lives and life savings into their businesses. For a city government to mandate the private details of how people should run their business is wrong. I am responsible for the men who work for me and their families. Their lives go how my business goes, except that I am responsible for payroll first- before my other expenses and before I pay myself, I pay them. I know that the business depends on their work, and I treat them accordingly. The government should not insert itself into my relationships with them.

Q16

Have you ever been arrested for a felony or misdemeanor crime? If yes, please explain.

No

Q17

Why are you seeking this office and what makes you the most qualified person to be a City Councilor in this District?

For the last four years, I have worked to dig deep into the issues that affect Albuquerque and bring my perspective to creating common-sense solutions to our problems. I am running again because I've been a part of a lot of successes - from rebuilding parks and roads to supporting families through our community and senior centers. But there's still more to do. There are more parks to refurbish, and more that we can do to support local businesses, such as a speaker series I've started for businesses on Central Avenue. I think I'm the most qualified person who's running in my District because I'm not running against anything. I'm running for the hard-working people who live in District 9. I've worked hard over the last four years to protect our neighborhoods, make our streets and parks safe and clean for everyone, and make District 9 a great place to build a business. I've started projects to increase affordable housing, help homeless youth get on their feet, and get ready for the centennial of Route 66, and I'd like to see these through. We spend a lot of time and energy on the homeless population, and rightly so. But the most important thing to me is making District 9 a great place to live, work, and raise a family.
