





WHAT NOW? SOME ASK

Hundreds of women from around various towns and municipalities in New Mexico headed to

Washington, D.C., this past weekend – not to attend then President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, but the Women's March on Washington Jan. 21.

The event, which drew an estimated 500,000 people, was organized as a way to appeal to the incoming administration to respect diversity and human rights.

According to the event's national website, the goal was to "join in diversity to show our presence in numbers too great to ignore."

The event followed an inauguration of a president who, while campaigning, vowed to build a wall between the United States and Mexico; reportedly called women names; and at one point proposed harsher immigration restriction on Muslims.

Trump also came under fire during his campaign for his treatment of women, generally, and particularly after a video recording surfaced in which he made sexually derogatory remarks about a woman who was married, commenting on her breasts. He also said that he could use his star power to get away with grabbing women by the pus-y.

Also during the campaign, women came forward to say that he made unwanted sexual advances toward them. Trump denied the claims.

Debra Haaland, a Pueblo of Laguna native and chairwoman of the New Mexico Democratic Party, said the march in Washington was everything – and more – that it was billed to be. Haaland said nobody anticipated that the march and its message would take off like a wild fire around the world.

"It was a tremendous way to send a message to the new president that women's rights and human rights are important," Haaland said. "I don't think anybody expected this to go worldwide, but it did. New Mexico was well-represented."

Haaland, a University of New Mexico graduate who ran a few years ago for lieutenant governor on the Gary King ticket, said a group from the Land of Enchantment chartered a bus and went to D.C. She said the ride was a private venture and had nothing to do with public funds. Similar marches, albeit on smaller scales, were held in Gallup and Albuquerque.

“We rented the bus and basically divided up how many people were going against the actual cost of the bus,” Haaland said. ‘It was a wonderful experience.”

Haaland said issues that came out of the march were equal pay for women, health care, racism, violence against women, and work place issues, among others.

The event inspired several demonstrations outside of Washington. According to news reports, thousands of similar demonstrations in small and big cities were held around the world such as Tokyo and London.

“Who would have thought that when a woman in Hawaii decided to organize this that it would take off like it did?” Haaland said. “It was well-organized and well-attended and the message definitely got itself across.”

A lot of those who attended the march came away with thoughts like those of Haaland.

“I attended and I went because I wanted and want to have my voice heard,” Mercedes Garcia, 33, of Cibola County, said. “I can tell you that everybody – man and woman – was on the same page this weekend.”

Garcia said she wants to help put health care for women in the forefront of people’s minds.

“All those women going to Washington was a thing of beauty,” Gallup resident Linda Yazzie, 67, said. “I wasn’t able to go, but I’d like to go next time.”

Yazzie said she didn't vote for either presidential candidate, so the march would have been a venue to get her voice heard in another manner.

By Bernie Dotson
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