

Keller wins Albuquerque mayor's race

Written by By Andy Lyman and Matthew Reichbach NM Political Report
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Tim Keller will be Albuquerque's next mayor.

Keller won the mayorship in a runoff election Nov. 14, easily defeating Albuquerque City Councilor Dan Lewis.

Also on Nov. 14, Cynthia Borrego won a seat on the city council, defeating Robert Aragon in a runoff election. With the Democrat winning, the party expanded its support on the council.

"Tonight our city has awakened and our city has spoken and we have truly come together," the Democrat told a crowd of supporters.

Keller said the results showed the city "rejected negative campaigning."

"And we rejected division," he said. "We rejected fear. We rejected language that was designed to divide us. And we came together. We stood and we embraced our diversity. We embraced our potential, the possibility of the Albuquerque we can be. We embraced inclusion and we embraced unity."

Keller will take office on Dec. 1, replacing Mayor Richard Berry, who served two terms and did not run for a third term. Keller currently serves as New Mexico State Auditor, and when he leaves that position, Gov. Susana Martinez will appoint his replacement.

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Albuquerque city elections are officially nonpartisan, but many divisions fell along party lines between Keller and his Republican opponent, Dan Lewis. Berry, the exiting mayor, is also a Republican.

During a short concession speech and press conference the evening of Nov. 14, Lewis wished Keller luck, adding that he hopes Keller will be a great mayor.

He also said he believed that crime had come to define Albuquerque and that this would be the major issue for the new mayor.

Keller's victory comes at a time with a high crime rate, a struggling economy and discontent over the construction of a major public transit line through the city's core. These issues, along with problems brought on by the overall economic struggles of the state, will prove an early test for Keller.

Lewis campaigned largely on the crime issue, echoing media reports and what Republicans have been saying in Santa Fe at the state legislature on a "revolving door" for criminals and the need for increased sentences.

Lewis frequently criticized Keller's crime plan, calling it "hug a thug."

Keller said the margin of victory provided him a "clear mandate" to implement his priorities, including cracking down on crime and helping early childhood education.

In 2009, Berry's victory was seen as a precursor to the Republican ascendancy. A year later, Susana Martinez took over the governor's mansion and Republicans cut into the Democratic State House majority.

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At that time, the mayor of Albuquerque was a Democrat, as was an outgoing two-term governor. In this election, the mayor of Albuquerque is a Republican, as is the outgoing two-term governor.

CITY COUNCIL RACE

Borrego defeated Robert Aragon in City Council District 5. Borrego is a Democrat, while Aragon is a Republican.

“Seven months ago I got in this race because I was sick and tired of the direction this city was headed, the crime that plagues this city has to stop, we must bring back our economy, and we must invest into our children’s education,” Borrego said. “This has been a hard fought race, and I am humbled by tonight’s results, voters are hungry for real change, they want to be taken seriously and make sure the issues are actually being addressed.

The district is currently held by Lewis until his term ends at the end of the month.

The win means that Democrats now have a supermajority of six seats on the nine-seat council. Democrats have enough votes to override a veto of the mayor, which would be unlikely with Keller in office.

The wider majority also means there would not need to be a unanimous vote among Democrats to pass legislation on the city council.

The Democratic Party of New Mexico praised Keller and Borrego.

“After eight years of the failed Republican administration of Berry and Lewis, it’s obvious why voters chose Tim Keller and Cynthia Borrego tonight—they’re ready for leaders who will invest in our communities and bring solutions to the challenges the city faces,” DPNM chair Richard Ellenberg said.

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