

TASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

Together toward a brighter future

By Sen. Juan Carlos Romero Hicks

Discussing Mexican-U.S. relations is difficult because of their complexity. We share the longest border in the world, with 1 million daily legal crossings each day. With Canada included, we share the biggest trade area in the world, even larger than that of the European Union. Mexico and the United States exchange \$140 million in trade goods every minute.

A million U.S. citizens reside in Mexico and 35 million people living in the United States have Mexican roots. Most of them are American citizens, or have legally authorized immigration status. We share food, cultures and the arts, ranging from tacos to Carlos Santana. Our relations go beyond our two federal governments.

Recent weeks have brought some tension to our relations, but with this comes an opportunity. We are taking time to reflect on what kind of relationship we want to have, and how to make it better. I feel obliged to offer a Mexican point of view about what kind of relationship we should have.

First of all, we are neighbors. We are going to be neighbors forever. We each need to find a way to profit from it. At least we should be good neighbors.

Arizona Gov. Paul J. Fannin said 60 years ago, "God made us neighbors, let us be good neighbors." He knew being good neighbors wasn't easy. Is being just good neighbors what we want? Can we be more than just neighbors?

No country can face the future alone, not even the one with the biggest economy, not even the United States. If "two heads are better than one," then two countries together can do better than one alone. We need to take the next step, we need to be friends and we will be friends. Aristotle defined friendship as the sharing of common goals for mutual improvement and achievement.

Friendship does not ensure against differences, or even occasional anger with each other. Friends do work things out.

Friends tell each other the truth, so we need to begin by telling each other the truth. For years, there has been a shared temptation by our public officeholders to blame the neighbor instead of taking the blame for their own actions. We've had presidents who blame the United States for Mexico's violence, poverty or unemployment. We should not fall into that trap.

If we feed the blaming spiral, we will upset each other without finding a solution. We need to move forward. We share a lot of common problems — political, economic, commercial, migratory, social, environmental, and security. We need to recognize that Mexico is responsible for part of what happens in the United States, just as the United States is responsible for part of what happens in Mexico.

If we are going to build a friendship, we need to focus on our goals and dreams. Working together and dreaming together, we will realize that we have the same dreams.

We dream of a land where poverty has been overcome, of a region that lives in peace, free of domestic and foreign threats. We dream of a better future for our children, of a region where human rights are fully respected. We dream of a region where an individual's future isn't bound to a cradle, where children face a better future. We dream of a region where our future is bright, not scary.

Our relationship is so important that we cannot let two presidents carry the burden of building it. It is up to us, the real neighbors, the citizens of both countries, to start building individual friendships, friendships between families, cities, states, companies, and two nations walking together to a brighter future.

The Mexican author Angeles Mastretta wrote, "We won't achieve anything by fighting separately, to fall defeated together."

The future of North America as a region is in both our hands.

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