

Opening Remarks
Mayor Alan Webber
December 4, 2018
Journalism under Fire

*As Mayor, it is a signal privilege for me to host you in Santa Fe. As a former journalist and the son of a journalist, I'm honored to be among such a distinguished group of journalists who are courageously, fiercely dedicated to the truth.

*The moment we are in makes this an urgent conversation. Authoritarianism is on the rise—here at home and around the world. Inevitably, authoritarianism's first attack is on journalists, assaulting the free press, seeking to silence reporters, preventing you from doing your work, and ultimately undermining the very concept of truth.

*At this time, when those who benefit by spreading fear and ignorance are openly, brazenly working to diminish the power of facts, freely reported all over the world, yours is a noble profession with a noble purpose.

*This gathering is historic. It is of critical importance. But if all we do is to gather, it is not enough.

*It is not enough when journalists are being beaten, imprisoned, intimidated, and yes, even murdered in cities, countries—even embassies—the world over.

*It is not enough when global leaders are turning the power of the press and the openness of the media against itself. Using bare-faced lies, endlessly repeated, they are spreading the false perception that the press is a threat to freedom, rather than the foundation of freedom. It was Thomas Jefferson who reminded us that, ". . . were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

*It is not enough because the concentration of the press into fewer and fewer hands threatens the fundamental underpinnings of journalistic integrity. A handful of media empires exert vast control over TV news broadcasts, insisting that reporters read the same propaganda simultaneously in city and towns across the United States. It was A.J. Liebling who reminded us, "Freedom of the press belongs to the man who owns one."

*By itself, a gathering is not enough. But it can be the start of something that **is** enough.

*It's fitting that Santa Fe is a Sanctuary City—and as a sanctuary city we welcome all who are set upon, victimized, attacked, and silenced.

*We are also a City of faith, strength, and resilience. As you come here, let us add our voices to your voices, our commitment to your commitment, our statements of solidarity to your statement of solidarity. I am here—we are here—to support you.

*But I'm here today, not only as a mayor. I'm also a citizen of the world, and a concerned one. And as a concerned citizen of the world I am compelled to challenge you—you are journalists under fire: So fire back! When they call out “fake news,” will you call out “fake leadership”?

*You know how to tell a story that captures the imagination of the world. Will you tell your powerful stories to the world, coming out of this gathering?

*Will you send a Santa Fe Statement—a journalistic manifesto—out to the world to memorialize this moment? Will you craft a bold statement of principle during this time in Santa Fe—a proclamation that will seize this moment and turn it into a declaration of unyielding commitment to the principles of a free press?

*As a union of fearless journalists, what will you band together to accomplish? Is there a global “NATO Alliance” of journalists that you will announce coming out of this meeting—a pronouncement that, from this time forward, an attack on one is an attack on all? Will you leave Santa Fe having formed a new united front, re-committed to the cause of journalistic justice, an enduring resistance to the ugly faces of fascism, dictatorship, censorship, and suppression, wherever they may rise up?

*In the end, the truth will endure, freedom will triumph, and free voices will rise to be heard—all over the world—*if we are willing to take on this fight*. It is not your fight alone—we are here to enlist in the cause as well. That is the pledge we make to you.

*Now, let us observe a moment of silence for the 48 journalists who have been killed for doing their jobs just this year, for the 262 journalists who have been imprisoned since 2017, and for every journalist who has suffered as a martyr in years past to bring us the truth.

*A moment of silence.