Responses to El Paso Times Questionnaire

Background Information

Please provide information on your personal and professional background. See questions below.

Name: Joseph Sam Armijo
Age: 87

1. Please describe your personal and professional background.

Personal:
I was born and raised in El Paso. I grew up on Myrtle Avenue in downtown El Paso and attended St, Mary's grade school, and Cathedral high school. I have three brothers and one sister and had a safe and happy childhood. Like most El Paso families, my parents believed in God, hard work, education, living within our means, and helping our community whenever possible. Those values have guided me through life.

After earning a degree in Metallurgical Engineering from Texas Western College and a commission in the U.S. Army at age 20, I made the best decision of my life and asked my beautiful Raquel to be my wife. She accepted and we were happily married for 67 years, and have two sons, one daughter and two grandchildren.

I am a United States Army veteran, and served at Ft. Hood Texas, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md and Ft. McCoy Wisconsisn. After military service I earned advanced engineering and science degrees from the University of Arizona and Stanford University.

As an engineer I have published over 50 engineering and scientific papers in peer reviewed journals, been granted 14 U.S. and international patents, and received many awards.
I have been amply rewarded in my career and have earned the means to give back to my hometown. In 1984 I endowed a presidential scholarship in Materials Science at UTEP and last year broadened eligibility to all students in the College of Engineering. To date over 60 scholarships have been granted and sufficient funds are available to award many more. I am blessed with excellent health, a good sense of humor, and the ability to solve difficult problems with organizations and people from many different countries.

Professional:
I have held many jobs, but the most important have been with the General Electric Company and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

During my GE career, I served in several executive positions including:
• General Manager of GE's Nuclear Energy Technical Services business providing engineering and licensing services to operating Boiling Water Reactors worldwide.
• General Manager of GE's Aerospace Space Power business supplying advanced nuclear power sources for civil and defense applications. I managed classified and non-classified projects for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense.
• General Manager of GE Nuclear Energy's Global Nuclear Fuels business. This business provided engineering services and nuclear fuel to numerous clients in the U.S., Mexico, Asia and Europe from factories in the United States, Japan and Spain.

• Director, Japan Nuclear Fuel Co. Ltd. (Hitachi, Toshiba, GE Joint Venture)
• Founding President, GENUSA Nuclear Fuels S.A. (GE ENUSA Joint Venture)

Government Experience:
After retirement from GE, I joined the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards and served for eight years. This Congressionally-mandated independent committee advises the Nuclear Regulatory Commissioners on all regulatory and licensing matters. I was elected to the Chairmanship by my colleagues and served from 2012 to 2014. During my Chairmanship, the ACRS dealt with numerous regulatory issues including:

• The U.S. response to the Fukushima disaster.
• The safety review of the new nuclear power plant design for the U.S. Navy's Gerald Ford aircraft carrier which was then under construction.

2. **How do you earn a living? Do you plan to continue if elected?**
I am retired and have adequate income from investments, and a General Electric pension. I closed my Nuclear Energy Consulting business this year and have no other businesses.

3. **Please describe your education.** Where did you get your high school diploma? What higher education degrees and certificates have you earned from where?
I have earned the following degrees:
• BS in Metallurgical Engineering from Texas Western College
• MS from the University of Arizona
• PhD in Materials Science from Stanford University
• In addition, I have completed several General Electric business management courses including GE's Executive Development course in Europe and have taken courses in Contracts and Torts from Santa Clara University School of Law.

4. **What experiences in leadership do you have that qualify you for this position?**
As shown in my response to question 1, I have many years of experience leading very large private sector businesses and federal government projects. I also have eight years of federal government regulatory experience including two years leading the ACRS. I know how to read and negotiate multimillion dollar contracts, and how to find and cut wasteful spending. I have no problem saying no to spending proposals that do not directly benefit the taxpayers of El Paso. I do not seek or accept large campaign donations and am funding my own campaign. Unlike other candidates I do not have any business in or with the city and will not be a part-time representative. Most importantly, my sole commitment is to the hard-working taxpayers of El Paso.

5. **Have you ever been arrested or charged with a crime?** Have you ever had a civil judgment against you? **No**. Have you ever been in arrears on local, state or federal taxes? No If so, please provide an explanation.

6. If elected, would you have any potential conflicts of interest that you are aware of that would impair your ability to serve? Please explain what they are and how you would avoid the conflict.

I will have no conflicts of interest.

7. **What does transparent government mean to you?** Will you be personally accessible to answer questions while in office?

During my career I have maintained an open-door policy for my colleagues, employees and clients. This timely communication alerted me to pending problems or opportunities and gave me time to solve the problems and exploit the opportunities. I plan to use the same open communication with my constituents in addition to regular District 1 meetings.

8. **Describe your political identity**.
I am a fiscal conservative running for a non-partisan office.

9. **What distinguishes you from the other candidates in this race, and why should voters choose you?**

As shown in my responses to questions 1, 3 and 4, I have a much better education and far greater private sector and federal government experience than either the incumbent or the other candidates for District 1 Representative. I have no business in or with the City of El Paso and will be a full-time representative. Most importantly I do not seek or accept large campaign donations and will oppose any proposal that does not directly benefit the taxpayers of El Paso.

Here are questions related to your specific race.

1. **Do you support the proposed Downtown I-10 Deck Plaza project?** Why or why not? If elected, would you support using city funds to help finance the project?

I will oppose the spending of one penny of taxpayers' money on the proposed Deck Plaza.

I oppose the Deck Plaza because it will be a costly entertainment facility that El Paso doesn't need, doesn't want, and can't afford. Here are my reasons:

• The promoters of the project want to build the Deck Plaza over four of the six downtown overpasses between Santa Fe and North Kansas streets. The overpasses on El Paso and North Stanton streets will be completely blocked, forcing drivers to use the remaining overpasses. Unfortunately for drivers, the traffic over the adjacent overpasses on North Oregon and North Mesa will be impeded by the need to create safe crosswalks to allow visitors to walk from one end of the Deck Plaza to the other. In other words, it will create chronic north/south traffic congestion in downtown El Paso.

• The widening of I-10 in downtown El Paso is not necessary. Today traffic in this part of I-10 flows smoothly at all hours of the day in both directions. Widening of I-10 to provide a base for the Deck Plaza will take years and create a traffic nightmare for El Paso drivers.

• I-10 is a federal highway, and its purpose is to provide safe and efficient transportation. Its roadways and overpasses should not be used by local developers to build entertainment facilities. I have written to the Secretary of Transportation to urge the Department to deny permission for such use.

• The Deck Plaza will cost far more than the original $207 million touted by promoters and their powerful backers. Thanks to Max Grossman's use of the Freedom of Information Act, we now know that the city council paid one million dollars for a detailed cost estimate by a reputable engineering and construction company. Their estimate was a whopping $412 million. Like all major city construction projects, it will probably cost a lot more. The promoters aren't worried because they plan to pass these costs on to El Paso taxpayers.

• The promoters of the Deck Plaza claim that the project will pay for itself because it will attract thousands of tourists who will spend millions of dollars in El Paso and provide a long-term revenue stream. This is nonsense, the claimed financial benefits to the city have no basis other than unsupported assumptions, unsupported claims, and the unrealistic hopes of the project's visionaries.

• El Paso has the worst combination of low income and the highest property taxes of any large city in Texas. It is unconscionable for City and County officials to ignore these realities and insist on adding hundreds of millions of new City and County debt for a totally discretionary entertainment venue. I intend to stop them.

2. **Property taxes remain a top concern for many El Paso homeowners. What specific actions would you support to slow the growth of property tax bills or reduce services?**

I have been fighting El Paso's constantly increasing property taxes since I ran for office in 2024. This year I was the only candidate for city council to speak before the city council during their hearings on the tax rate and budget. On August 4 and August 17, I presented the council with a detailed plan to defer and cut $21 million from low-priority activities in the proposed budget and permit the council to adopt a no-new-revenue tax rate. This proposal would not have cut funding for our first responders, city employees or essential services. The city council instead voted on August 18 to set a tax rate slightly below the voter approval rate and again raise our property taxes.

There is plenty of wasteful spending in this new budget. If I am elected, I will continue to identify wasteful spending and work with my colleagues on the city council to stop all spending on non-essential activities and prioritize spending on essential city services. I will propose that the new city council pass a no-new-revenue tax rate ordinance. This will force future city councils to vote against wasteful spending proposals and focus on generating much more revenue from the various businesses and properties that the City of El Paso already owns.

3. **Road conditions continue to be a major concern for voters. What steps would you take to ensure adequate and sustainable funding for street maintenance and repairs across El Paso?**

The condition of our streets is a direct result of the spending policies of the past and current city councils. Repairing and maintaining our streets are essential city services. If the new city council has the courage to cut wasteful spending on non-essential programs and projects, there will be enough money to pave and properly maintain our streets. If elected, I will work with my colleagues to increase the annual paving budget fourfold.

4. **What is your assessment of the city's Data Center Policy Framework?** Does it strike the right balance between economic development and protecting community resources, or would you propose changes?

I am opposed to the permitting of any new data centers in El Paso and the current 380 contract with META.

Today the city council appears to be negotiating some sort of community agreement with META. El Paso taxpayers don't want a basket of token goodies or promises from META. El Paso taxpayers want an amended 380 contract that will insulate them from all costs for

electric power and water created by the construction and operation of the META data center. In addition, El Paso taxpayers want significant reductions of the tax abatement giveaways in the current 380 contract.

The current city council seems to think that El Paso has no ability to bring META to the negotiating table to correct the worst provisions of the existing 380 agreement. I disagree. META management is aware that El Paso citizens are united in opposition to data centers in general and META's in particular. I have run large prosperous businesses and know that most want to avoid long-term acrimonious relations with the citizens and governments of the communities in which they operate. If META wants to have good relations with El Paso, I believe that it is possible for a new city council to renegotiate the current 380 contract into one that is reasonable and fair to both El Paso citizens and META.

5. **Should the city continue offering tax abatements and other incentives to attract profitable corporations or industries? Under what circumstances, if any, should those incentives be approved?**

The city should not bribe businesses to induce them to locate here. The 380 META agreement is an example of this approach. META is highly profitable, but that matters little if our citizens' costs for electricity and water increase as the result of the construction and operation of its data center. Long term and large tax abatement should not be used at all in exchange for a handful of short-term construction jobs.

Public safety remains a core city responsibility. What are your top priorities for police, fire and emergency services, and how would you pay for them?

Public safety is the top priority for any government. We have reputation as a very safe city and that is to the credit of our police, firefighters and emergency responders. We can easily pay for their outstanding services if we stop wasting so much money on non-essential and wasteful programs and projects.

6. **What do you see as El Paso's biggest economic challenge, and what specific policies would you pursue to address it?**

El Paso carries too much debt, and the current city council has an appetite for even more. Our budgets include millions of dollars of wasteful spending and not enough money for essential city services such as paving our streets or fixing our annual flooding problems. Our city council does not demand that that all city-owned businesses reduce their costs of operation and generate more revenue for the general fund. All of these policies are responsible for our constantly increasing property taxes and the flight of thousands of our citizens to New Mexico. If elected I will work with the new council to reverse all the policies and practices that have led to this situation.

7. **Have you read the City Charter?** What did you learn is the top City Council priority?

The City Charter is one of many important documents that a city representative should be familiar with. The City Charter establishes a council-manager form of government, in which the City Council sets municipal policy and provides direction to the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for administering city government and carrying out the Council's policies.

But the important document which I have substantially reviewed is the City Budget. It sets how much the city spends each fiscal year, which is directly tied to the amount of taxes each property owner pays.

8. **City leaders often face divisive issues.** How would you work with colleagues, stakeholders and residents to find common ground and build consensus on major city decisions?

I have a great deal of experience working with people from many different organizations and countries to resolve problems and reach agreements on new initiatives. I have negotiated many multimillion-dollar agreements with customers and suppliers. I focus on facts and reason, treat others with respect, and listen to their arguments. I will use this same approach on the city council.

9. **What should be the city's next big civic project?**

We don't need large civic projects like the Deck Plaza that will increase our debt, raise our taxes and fail to raise significant near-term revenues. Instead, we need to spend our money and do a better job of maintaining our parks and infrastructure.