



## **REALIZING ARIZONA'S POTENTIAL FOR COMMERCE WITH MEXICO**

### ***Arizona Forward Spotlights Border Investment Opportunities***

TUCSON, Ariz. (Feb. 5, 2014) – An interactive panel of local experts, including Nogales Mayor Arturo Garino, will share perspectives on Arizona's growing opportunities for trade with Mexico at a luncheon presented by Arizona Forward from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Feb. 20, at the Hilton East Tucson.

Born and raised in Nogales, AZ, Mayor Garino has worked diligently to promote his municipality and the border region. One month into his term, he and Mayor Jose Angel Hernandez Barajas of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico signed the historic "Sisterhood Agreement." By so doing, the two community leaders created a partnership on both sides of the border to work together on trade and commerce, education, and border security.

Other luncheon panelists include: Luis Felipe Seldner III, President and CEO of The Offshore Group and Lea Marquez-Peterson, President and CEO of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The largest private sector employer in the state of Sonora, The Offshore Group was incorporated in 1986 and is headquartered in Tucson. It's the largest provider of Mexico outsourcing solutions to firms seeking low-cost, low-risk operations. Prior to taking the helm of the company from his father, Seldner spent 10 years in the financial industry with Fortune 500 companies such as JP Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo Investments and Merrill Lynch.

During her tenure, Marquez-Peterson has grown the Tucson Hispanic Chamber from 380 businesses to more than 1,000, and it was recognized by the U.S Hispanic Chamber as the 2013-2014 National Chamber of the Year. She was formerly executive director for Greater Tucson Leadership, and in 2011 was appointed by the Obama Administration to the National Women's Business Council.

Arizona is losing ground in trade with its neighbor to aggressive competitors like California and Texas, which have capitalized on their geographic advantage and heavily invested in border trade. In 2012, Texas' import/export trade with Mexico totaled \$194 billion versus \$13 billion for Arizona.

"As a border state, Arizona houses the infrastructure to become a trade titan with premium access to the \$1.8 trillion Mexican economy," said Diane Brossart, president and CEO of Arizona Forward. "This will require innovative thinking and productive ways to engage with our economically maturing next-door neighbor."

#### **About Arizona Forward**

Arizona Forward is a 45-year-old, non-profit public interest organization that brings community leaders together on sustainability issues to improve the environmental quality and economic vitality of cities and towns throughout the Grand Canyon State. Its collective influence fosters healthy communities, helping to ensure smart growth and development, efficient transportation, improved air quality, responsible water management, energy alternatives and meaningful education.