

State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

For Immediate Release
1/30/03

Contact: Gilbert Gallegos
505.476.2299

**GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON APPOINTS NEW SUPREME COURT
JUSTICE**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today appointed Albuquerque lawyer Edward L Chavez to serve as a Justice on the New Mexico Supreme Court. The governor also promised to support the state Judiciary, while challenging the courts to be more aggressive on DWI and domestic violence cases.

“Today, I want to once again recognize the judiciary as a co-equal branch of government,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “This branch was forgotten and even ignored over the last eight years.

“I want to treat the judicial branch with respect, and support its request for adequate funding. I learned this week that New Mexico ranks 52nd in judicial pay – lower than the U.S. territories of Guam and Northern Mariana Island. Money is tight, but I recognize that we need to increase the pay of our judges. This is essential to recruit and retain a strong judiciary at all levels,” Governor Bill Richardson said.

“At the same time, by giving the judiciary the tools they need, it is time that they are held to a higher standard. We need stronger enforcement of existing DWI and domestic violence laws. But I am not stopping there. I have an aggressive legislative package of DWI and domestic violence bills. With the Legislature’s support, and those laws in place, we need to enforce them. And I want the courts to be just as aggressive in sentencing those criminals who continue to drive drunk or assault women and kids.”

The governor praised Edward Chavez, a native of Santa Fe and lifelong New Mexican, for his tireless work ethic and integrity – qualities required of a Justice sitting on the state’s highest court.

Chavez replaces Justice Gene Franchini, who retired in December after a distinguished career on the bench.

Governor Bill Richardson introduced Chavez as the newest member of the Supreme Court during a ceremony at the Capitol attended by first-year students from the University of New Mexico Law School – Chavez’s alma mater.

“I want the law students here today to take a good look at Edward Chavez. You are following in his footsteps,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “Edward is a native of Santa Fe and lifelong New Mexican. Back in 1978, Edward was a fresh out of Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, and beginning his law career at the UNM. Twenty-five years later, he is preparing to take his rightful place on the New Mexico Supreme Court.

“Edward also represents something I have been talking about for some time now. He is a perfect example of the diversity I am seeking as I make appointments to New Mexico’s courts. I chose Edward for the Supreme Court because of his impeccable qualifications as a lawyer, as well as the personal and professional integrity he brings with him to the bench,” Governor Bill Richardson said.

Chavez grew up in Santa Fe, spending many weekends working on family ranches in San Miguel and Torrance counties. His parents demanded that he go to college. He worked his way into the UNM School of Law.

“I want all groups of New Mexicans who, like Edward, a Hispanic, have worked hard and earned the right to be considered for the highest ranks in state government, to consider the judiciary as a realistic career path,” Governor Bill Richardson said.

“I want women to focus on these same goals. Just look at our newly elected Chief Justice, Petra Jimenez Maes. She is the first Hispanic woman in the United States to be a chief justice of a state Supreme Court. The point is to have New Mexico’s courts reflect the makeup of the state as a whole – male, female, Anglo, Hispanic, African American, Native American, Asian American. Such diversity can only serve to improve the lives of all New Mexicans.”