

Governor Bill Richardson announced in Santa Fe today two major educational appointments, naming former Governor Toney Anaya a Regent for New Mexico Highlands University to replace activist Regents Chairman John Loehr, who was appointed to a five year term on the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education effective July 1st and a position as Senior Council to the Governor on Education.

“I promised the people of New Mexico that improving the quality of education at every level in our state would be a top priority for me,” Gov. Richardson said. “I am making these important appointments as part of our progress toward this goal. I know both of these men well and they have shown that they can get the job done for New Mexico. Gov. Toney Anaya brings intelligence, experience and prestige to the Highlands Board of Regents. He knows our universities and our state well. I am pleased he has agreed to serve in this important post. John Loehr is a high energy leader and courageous educational reformer who has put Highlands on the right path to recovery. I know he will provide good council and sound guidance to me on the major challenges we face in New Mexico.”

Toney Anaya served as an activist Attorney General (1975-1978) and as a progressive Governor (1983-1986) of New Mexico.

He attended Highlands University in 1959, and subsequently graduated from Georgetown University School of Foreign Services (1964) and then American University Washington College of Law (1968). Two brothers and a sister-in-law have also attended Highlands University.

As Attorney General, he raises the stature of that office to one of the most important offices in the state government. As Governor, he emphasized the importance of education in promoting economic development and higher paying jobs as he initiated efforts to diversify the state's economy to make it less dependent upon the vagaries of the extractive industry. Among other initiatives, he proposed legislation to create the Rio Grande Research Corridor (a cooperative venture including higher education, federal research laboratories, and the private sector); established Centers for Technical Excellence at UNM, NMSU, and New Mexico Tech; and, created a Task Force on Higher Education Reform and adopted its recommendations for the improvement of higher education in New Mexico, including the creation of the current Commission on Higher Education. He created a similar Task Force on Public School Reform and implemented its numerous recommendations.

A licensed attorney for over 35 years, he remains active in the practice of law out of his office in Santa Fe. Three years ago, he helped form the first national Hispanic-owned telephone company, Valor Telecommunications, with a service territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma, and the goal of bringing modern high-speed telecom services to previously under-served rural areas of the country.

He and his wife, the Former First Lady Elaine Anaya, have three children and seven grandchildren.

Loehr, 61, a Highlands alumnus, was appointed as a Regent by Governor Gary Johnson and was an outspoken leader in the two-year effort to oust Selimo Rael as President. He was reappointed to the Board of Regents by Gov. Richardson in February of this year. He is an educator and successful business management consultant who worked in London, Paris, and Geneva during the 1980s and early 1990s. He sold his business in 1992 and moved back to New Mexico, where he maintains residences in Corrales and Montezuma. He was the founding Superintendent of Education at the Alamo Navajo School and was president of a group of non-profit schools in California in the 1970s. He was born in New York, graduated from Farmington High School and came to Highlands in 1959 as a baseball player. He serves on the Santa Fe Big Brothers/Big Sisters Board and, until last week, was a Trustee of the United World College in Montezuma. Loehr sings in the Highlands University Madrigal Choir and is an avid bicyclist, riding on a winning team in the recent Mt. Taylor Winter Quadrathlon.

“I am eager to help Gov. Richardson’s effort to create higher quality education for all New Mexicans. I am thankful for the personal support he gave to Highlands and I will reciprocate by doing my best in these new responsibilities,” Loehr said. “I appreciate all the kindness and support of so many people during our difficult years at highlands. I am optimistic that our hard times are mostly behind us and that Toney Anaya will help move Highlands back to full academic and fiscal health.”