



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

For immediate release
3/04/04

Contact: Gilbert Gallegos
505-476-2217

Governor Bill Richardson makes leadership changes

Mike Cerletti takes expertise to Tourism Department, Fred Peralta to manage State Fair

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today transferred two of his top administrators to new positions in an effort to get the most out of their qualifications and experiences in private industry and state government, and help implement the Governor's agenda to move New Mexico forward.

Beginning immediately, Mike Cerletti will become the new Secretary of the Department of Tourism. Cerletti brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry and international tourism with him as he takes on a role he first tackled in 1991 as the state's first Secretary of Tourism. Cerletti will leave his job as general manager of the New Mexico State Fair to take the Tourism position.

Governor Richardson is also appointing outgoing Tourism Secretary Fred Peralta to take over the management duties at the State Fair. Governor Richardson praised Peralta for his effective management skills during his tenure at Tourism, and said he is counting on the former Mayor of Taos to improve upon the progress made during the past 15 months at the State Fair.

"First I want to commend Michael for his great work at the State Fair. Attendance was up and once again, the New Mexico State fair ranks as one of the best in the nation. Michael was the first Secretary of Tourism under former Governor Bruce King. His background in the hospitality industry and his knowledge of the international tourism

industry will be a great asset to the state and to my administration,” Governor Bill Richardson said.

“I understand the important economic role tourism plays in New Mexico. I hope to expand our efforts to attract foreign visitors. Also, I will work mayors and county officials statewide to see how the state can better support local tourism,” Cerletti said.

“New Mexico is unique in so many ways and if we effectively market our many attractions, we will greatly expand our tourism industry. Tourism impacts our economy in so many positive ways, from Hotels to Restaurants to gas stations and airports. Every dollar spent has a ripple effect throughout our state,” Cerletti said.

Cerletti served as the Head of the Department of Hotel, Restaurant, Tourism Management at New Mexico State University from 2000 until 2002. The School ranked in the top twenty-five nationally.

Governor Richardson said Peralta’s background as a mayor and small businessman will be a perfect fit for the State Fair.

While surrounding states suffered major setbacks in tourism during the past year, Peralta helped keep New Mexico’s tourism industry going strong. Peralta’s focus on helping rural communities overcome economic difficulties or drought-related hardships paid off in communities like Silver City, where tourism grew by 12 percent last year, despite the loss of jobs.

“Fred’s credentials and business background will help him build the State Fair into a world-class exposition that truly honors the people and cultures of New Mexico,” Governor Richardson said.

“The Governor understands my management style and my strong background in business, construction and property management,” Peralta said. “I will take a hands-on approach to making improvements to the Fairgrounds and managing the complex operations at the State Fair.”