



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON



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Governor Bill Richardson Lowers Flags in Honor of Senate President Pro-Tem Ben Altamirano

SANTA FE -- Governor Bill Richardson has ordered flags be flown at half staff in honor and mourning of Senate President Pro-Tem Ben Altamirano, 77, who passed away on Thursday. Flags shall fly at half staff beginning Monday, December 31, 2007 through sundown on Thursday, January 3, 2008.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of a great New Mexican and my dear friend, Benny Altamirano," Governor Bill Richardson said. "Benny was a true statesman whose soft-spoken demeanor and love for the state of New Mexico helped earn him the respect of everyone who crossed his path. Benny will be dearly missed. Barbara and I send our condolences to Benny's wife, Nina, and his entire family."

Altamirano was the longest serving member of the New Mexico Senate, holding his seat since 1971. The Silver City native represented State District 28, serving the people of Socorro, Grant and Catron counties for more than three decades. Altamirano was Senate President Pro-Tem for the past 3 years. Prior to that, he was chairman of the Finance Committee for 17 years. He was on a number of legislative committees including co-chair of the Capitol Outlay Subcommittee and the Legislative Council. Prior to serving in the Senate, Altamirano was Grant County Commissioner for 4 years and ten years on the Silver City Town Council.

"Ben was a tireless advocate for those who could not speak for themselves," said First Lady Barbara Richardson. "He strongly believed in the importance of supporting New Mexico's youth programs, and his advocacy will be deeply missed. Bill and I have lost a dear personal friend."

Altamirano enlisted in the United States Army in 1946 and served with the European occupation forces during World War II. Upon returning to Grant County, he attended Western New Mexico University. While also serving the people of southwestern New Mexico, Altamirano owned several grocery stores for 40 years.

He is survived by his wife, Nina Melendrez; his two sons, Ben Jr. and Paul; and daughter, Yolanda Manzano.

In honor of Senate President Pro-Tem Ben Altamirano, Lt. Governor Denish will sign an Executive Order directing flags be flown at half-staff from Monday, December 31, 2007 through sundown on Thursday, January 3, 2008.

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