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New Mexico Indian Affairs Department Expresses Condolences on the Passing of Former Governor Bill Richardson

SANTA FE— The New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, represented by Secretary Designate James R. Mountain, extends its heartfelt prayers and condolences to the family of the late former Governor Bill Richardson.

Governor Richardson's legacy is celebrated as that of a great leader and champion for Native American tribes and the people of New Mexico. His pivotal role in the unanimous passage of Senate Bill 196, known as the State Tribal Collaboration Act of 2009, marked a significant milestone in advancing the relationship between the state and tribal communities.

Secretary Designate James R. Mountain reflects on Governor Richardson's enduring commitment, stating, "Governor Richardson was a champion for our tribes here in New Mexico and across the country. He was dedicated to ensuring that our Native people had a genuine voice and representation at the table."

Secretary Mountain's personal connection with Governor Richardson dates to his youth when his father, Jay Mountain, served as Governor of San Ildefonso Pueblo, and Governor Richardson was the Congressman. Later in his career as Governor of San Ildefonso, Secretary Mountain had the honor of working closely with Governor Richardson. "He was committed to working with tribal leaders to empower Indian self-determination and understood the path to achieving sovereignty," he emphasized.

Recalling a pivotal moment, Secretary Mountain added, "I remember his visit to my office in 2006, where we discussed the model for legislation to strengthen state and tribal relations. Three years later, he turned that vision into reality by signing the State Tribal Collaboration Act into law. Governor Richardson was a true visionary who remained dedicated to all tribal people and the people of New Mexico. He was not only a mentor but a dear friend. My gratitude goes out to Governor Richardson, and my thoughts and prayers are with his family."

Since 2003 the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (IAD) has implemented groundbreaking state-tribal policies intended to improve the quality of life for the state's Native citizens. Our initiatives are designed to strengthen Tribal and state relations and address the challenges we face in our communities: economic development, infrastructure improvement, the protection of our cultures and languages, health care accessibility, and educational opportunities for our most precious resource— our children. Learn more at www.iad.state.nm.us.