



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 18, 2022

Contact: NALEO Media, media@naleo.org

NALEO Remembers the Life and Service of U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos

Cavazos was the first Latino to serve in a Presidential Cabinet

Washington, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of statesman Lauro Cavazos and issued the following statement:

“As a sixth-generation Mexican American and the nation’s first Latino to serve in a Presidential Cabinet post, Lauro Cavazos’ work was deeply influential in our community. Throughout his entire life, Dr. Cavazos was committed to educational excellence and uplifting Latinos and other students of color over the course of their educational journeys.

“From 1988 to 1990, Dr. Cavazos served as U.S. Secretary of Education under the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations. Propelled by his extensive qualifications and experiences, his appointment was confirmed by the Senate in an impressive 94-0 vote. While serving in this role, Cavazos’ priorities included a reduction in high school dropout rates, particularly among minority students; greater accountability by teachers; and efforts to re-inspire children’s love of learning.

“Prior to serving as Secretary of Education, Dr. Cavazos taught anatomy at the Medical College of Virginia (now part of Virginia Commonwealth University) for ten years before continuing his professorship at Tufts University School of Medicine from 1964 to 1980.

“In 1980, Dr. Cavazos was named president of his alma mater, Texas Tech University, where he presided over 24,000 students and was well-known for increasing the enrollments of Latino and Black students. At the time, Dr. Cavazos’ presidential appointment was historic — as Texas Tech became the nation’s largest school to be headed by a Latino.

“Recognizing his commitment to education and the Latino community, NALEO was honored to have Dr. Cavazos speak at our 19th Annual Conference in 2002. He spoke on a panel featuring the first five Latinos to serve in a Presidential Cabinet, alongside Manuel Lujan, Jr. (Secretary of the Interior; 1989–1993); Henry Cisneros (Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; 1993–1997); Federico Peña (Secretary of Transportation; 1993–1997); and Bill Richardson (Secretary of Energy; 1998-2001).

“NALEO sends its condolences to all of Dr. Cavazos’ family, friends, and loved ones — including his 10 children, 15 grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. May he always be remembered for his lifelong dedication to learning and his belief that everyone deserves equal access to a quality education.”

###

About NALEO

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials is the non-partisan leadership organization of the nation's more than 7,000 Latino elected and appointed officials.