

## **GOP governors choose Martinez to lead RGA**

Written by By Matthew Reichbach  
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As was widely expected, Republican governors selected Susana Martinez to lead the Republican Governors Association.

The governors picked Martinez to be the next chair of the organization on Nov. 19 at a meeting in Las Vegas, which pushes Martinez even further into the national spotlight. The selection will surely prompt more discussion of Martinez as a possible Vice Presidential candidate or cabinet member of a Republican presidential administration. Martinez has denied any interest in national office each time she is asked.

Martinez previously was the vice chair of the RGA, which is an organization that represents Republican governors throughout the country and seeks to get more Republicans elected to the position. Republicans currently are in the majority of governor's mansions across the country, 31 in all.

"As this year's gubernatorial elections proved, the RGA is the most effective political organization in the country and it is my honor to serve as RGA Chair for 2016," Martinez said in a statement. "I am eager to build upon the RGA's 2015 momentum with the 12 gubernatorial elections we have in 2016, each of which presents a real opportunity to elect or re-elect a Republican governor. All across America, Republican chief executives are solving the problems that Americans need fixed and I am proud to serve in this role to help elect more of these outstanding leaders."

Martinez is the first female governor and first Latina to chair the organization; Martinez is still the only Latina ever elected as governor in the United States.

Keeping governor's offices in the next few cycles will be key; redistricting takes place in 2021. In 2017, two states (Virginia and New Jersey) will hold elections, while in 2018, 36 states will hold elections, though Vermont and New Hampshire have two-year terms.

The vote comes after several weeks of bad headlines for Martinez, including reported FBI investigation into her top political adviser Jay McCleskey and into possible retaliatory audits from her Taxation and Revenue Department.

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Martinez herself confirmed to media that she spoke to the FBI. The Democratic Party of New Mexico highlighted the recent reports in a statement sent on Thursday morning, hours before the vote.

“To keep Jay McCleskey by her side even as a federal grand jury considers indictments against him sends a message to New Mexicans that Susana Martinez is comfortable with scandal and corruption,” DPNM Executive Director Joe Kabourek said. “New Mexicans have had enough. Her key political adviser, her secretary of state, her secretary of taxation and revenue – where does it stop?”

Dianna Duran, the Secretary of State mentioned by Kabourek, resigned shortly before pleading guilty to corruption charges. Duran, however, was elected to the position and while she is a Republican like Martinez is not part of Martinez’s administration.

According to *Albuquerque Journal* capitol bureau chief Dan Boyd, no one has expressed concern about McCleskey joining Martinez at the meeting.

Martinez takes over from Tennessee governor Bill Haslam.

Haslam said Martinez is an “outstanding” choice.

“She has made the tough decisions necessary to move New Mexico forward and knows what it takes to win in a blue state, a skill that will be vital to ensuring our governors and candidates have the resources they need to win in 2016,” Haslam said in a statement. “It has been an honor to serve with her as my Vice Chair for this past year and I look forward to the success she will achieve as the RGA’s Chair for 2016.”

Martinez also is not the first governor to lead a national organization. Bill Richardson was the chair of the Democratic Governors Association in 2005 and 2006. Richardson ran for president in 2008; Martinez has repeatedly said that she would not seek national office.

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