



Spaceport America Mourns Loss of Former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson

LAS CRUCES, N.M. - Spaceport America joins the state of New Mexico, its citizens, and countless individuals around the country in mourning the loss of former Governor Bill Richardson.

Richardson passed away at the age of 75 at his summer home in Chatman, Mass., in the early hours of Saturday (Sept. 2, 2023) morning.

During Richardson's tenure as governor of the Land of Enchantment, he collaborated with Sir Richard Branson to discuss their shared vision of a facility that would both usher in a new era of commercial space travel and push New Mexico into the space industry. Those nascent conversations evolved into an agreement between the state of New Mexico and Branson's newly-founded company Virgin Galactic to have the state serve as the home of Branson's company.

This vision became a reality on December 14, 2005, when Richardson and Branson announced the State of New Mexico would begin construction on Spaceport America, the world's first purpose-built commercial spaceport, to house Virgin Galactic's operations and to serve as a viable site for aerospace companies

around the planet. And, in 2021, New Mexico was proud to become the third state to send humans to space.

Statement from Spaceport America officials

“Governor Richardson’s belief in the future of New Mexico is reflected in Spaceport America’s journey in developing technologies, companies, and economic opportunity for the citizens of our state and all mankind.

“During his time in office, Governor Richardson had a vital and profound impact on the creation of the spaceport. It can well be argued that the spaceport would not exist without his vision, passion, belief in the potential of New Mexico, and the tireless work he put in to make it a reality. He will be greatly missed.”

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[Spaceport America](#) is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket-friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace, low population density, a 12,000-foot by 200-foot runway, vertical launch complexes, and about 340 days of sunshine and low humidity.

Some of the most respected companies in the commercial space industry are tenants at Spaceport America: [Virgin Galactic](#), [HAPSMobile/ AeroVironment](#), [UP Aerospace](#), and [SpinLaunch](#).

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