

Stockton College dedicates new Public Policy Center to Hughes

New Mexico governor flies in to honor ex-ambassador

By **CHRIS ROOF**
Ocean City Sentinel

POMONA - The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey dedicated its Public Policy Center Monday to a man known for public service.

The center was formally named for William J. Hughes, whose achievements and devotion to public policy, at the state, national and international level, deserved the recognition, according to the public servants who gathered to honor him.

"I'm honored to be here. I'm very grateful to be a part of this," said Hughes, who won the Second District congressional seat as well as the U.S. ambassador to Panama under President Clinton.

"This will provide a fine public policy center and a voice in a very important area," Hughes added.

The center will become a haven for public policy and economic issues, as well as a centerpiece for data collecting, polling, and debating. Essentially, the center will place South Jersey in the

'With Bill, it's always public service first and politics second.'

-N.M. Gov. Bill Richardson

public policy arena for the Garden State.

There were many distinguished guests in attendance on Monday night: Gov. Jon S. Corzine, U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, former Gov. Jim Florio, Stockton College President Herman J. Saatkamp, as well as other state legislators.

This event also attracted one of the nation's most recognizable and prominent politicians, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who sought the Democratic nomination for president this year.

Richardson was filled with praise for his friend, and former colleague Bill Hughes.

"I'm very proud to be here because this represents the best in public service," Richardson said before the formal ceremony began. Richardson was the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations when Hughes was



Chris Roof/Ocean City Sentinel

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, talks about former Ambassador William Hughes, below, at the dedication of Richard Stockton College's William J. Hughes Public Policy Center Monday.

ambassador to Panama.

"With Bill," Richardson said, "it's always public service first and politics second."

Nearly 200 invited guests were in attendance Monday night, which was held in the atrium in front of the college's library. The F-Wing, which is close to the library, will have the official William J. Hughes Public Policy

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Hughes Public Policy Center dedicated at Stockton College

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Center title.

The endowment for the event surpassed what was initially expected. The event's goal was to raise \$500,000. However, President Saatkamp announced that the event raised more than \$1 million, which is the largest endowment in the college's history.

"The center is clearly filling a niche as a needed voice on policy matters for southern New Jersey, and the entire state and region," Saatkamp said.

Without question, this was Hughes' night. He visited with his friends and acquaintances before the formal ceremony began; many were anxious to embrace Hughes for this special night.

After Saatkamp delivered the opening address, Corzine offered his thoughts on the man of the evening.

"Bill Hughes is a classic human being who has dedicated his life to public service," said Corzine. "This center will be real public policy in South Jersey, and will be very important for the state's future."

"When Bill called me and

invited me here, I said yes," Richardson said, "because this is a true public service. Here's a guy who genuinely cares about ethics, and foreign policy issues."

Richardson went on to praise Hughes further and told a few stories from when they worked together at the United Nations.

When Hughes finally came to the lectern, there was a standing ovation.

Smiling, Hughes drew laughter when he mentioned Richardson.

"Even my mother doesn't say stuff like that about me," he said.

And he was equal in his praise for the New Mexico governor and former presidential contender.

"I was thinking about who I'd like to have here, and one person came to mind: Bill Richardson. He's like your friendly neighbor, someone you can always talk to and count on."

Nearing the end of his speech, Hughes asked Sharon Schulman, the center's director, to come to the podium. Hughes presented her with a bouquet of roses, showing his appreciation for her work.

With all praise Hughes received from various quarters Monday night, it was Richardson who summed up Hughes' character in a few short sentences.

"He's a great American citizen," Richardson said. "This is a special man."