

Earth Science Achievement Award citation for Senator Jeff Bingaman and Dr. Bob Simon

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New Mexicans, like citizens of most western states, are deeply impacted by earth science issues. They care deeply about the environment in which they live, and yet are also heavily dependent on the natural resources their state provides. Extractive energy and metals industries are the mainstays of our economy, and water quantity and quality issues are at the very heart of life in our state. Geology underpins the scenic beauty of our state, which draws many outside visitors to our parks, monuments, and public lands. Given this, it's not surprising that a New Mexico legislator would value issues related to earth science, and would have the wisdom to understand that sound scientific knowledge is essential in order to solve complex resource and environmental issues.

Throughout their time on the congressional stage, Senator Bingaman and Dr. Simon set a high priority on scientific excellence. This philosophy can be observed in their many cooperative legislative achievements. The records of both men show an understanding of the importance of water supply and water quality issues and a respect for responsible resource development and environmental preservation of areas of special value and interest. They understand that scientific knowledge is the foundation for the wise management of our nation's lands and its resources.

Jeff Bingaman was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1982, where he served until his retirement in 2013. From 1999-2013, Bingaman served as chair or the ranking member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, where he championed significant earth science legislation for New Mexico and for the nation.

Dr. Bob Simon began working in the U.S. Senate in 1993 as a Science Fellow on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, where he served for three years. In 1997, he became Science and Technology advisor in Jeff Bingaman's office, and served as his chief energy legislative assistant. In 1999, Senator Bingaman appointed Simon to the position of Democratic staff director for the Committee on Energy and Natural

Resources, where he served as the full committee staff director when Senator Bingaman was chairman. After Senator Bingaman's retirement, Dr. Simon moved to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where he worked on energy, climate, and resource issues until his retirement in 2016.

Given the many geoscience-relevant legislative achievements jointly accomplished by Senator Bingaman and Dr. Simon, as well as others on their staff, it's hard to know where to begin. So, I will focus on some things that I think were particularly important to New Mexico, and the New Mexico Bureau of Geology, who is sponsoring this award.

The Omnibus Public Land Management act of 2009, introduced by Senator Bingaman, protected over 2 million acres of wilderness, expanded several national parks, established 10 new National Heritage Areas, ensured the wild and scenic character of hundreds of miles of rivers, and authorized numerous water projects at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. According to Allyson Anderson-Book, current executive director of the American Geoscience Institute, who was a congressional science fellow with Senator Bingaman, "Jeff and Bob work tirelessly on water management projects that engaged a good deal of the geoscientific community, and worked very hard to reinforce the levee system in New Mexico, year after year". Also included in this act were provisions to protect paleontological resources, to establish a national landscape conservation system, to designate the New Mexico Ft. Stanton-Snowy River cave National Conservation area, and to form a new National Monument in the Robledo Mountains. Also, of great importance to New Mexico is that this legislation included reauthorization of the Nation Geological Mapping act of 1992, through 2018. This act has brought close to 5 million dollars to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology to support fundamental geological mapping in New Mexico. And, for those of you who are not geologists, I'd like to stress that geological mapping is the foundation on which fossil fuel discovery, metal and industrial mineral extraction, hydrological exploration, understanding of geological hazards, and geoscience education, are built. Estimates suggest that every \$1 spend on geological mapping returns \$25 of income to our state.

Other New Mexico-focused legislation championed by Senator Bingaman and Dr. Simon includes establishment of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute, which

is located in Carlsbad, NM; High Plains Aquifer legislation to study recharge and depletion of a large, and threatened aquifer; and establishment of the Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, which is in an area of great natural beauty and scientific interest. And, I also have to mention their involvement in an area near and dear to my heart, the Valles Caldera, which is an area of unparalleled physical beauty and scientific importance, being a huge volcanic caldera where geological studies allowed the largest type of volcano known on earth to be studied and understood. Senator Bingaman, and colleagues, including the late Senator Pete Dominci, championed moving this property into public ownership, allowing visitors and scientists from New Mexico, and around the world, to visit this remarkable feature, and to continue to reveal the scientific secrets of our own, New Mexican, supervolcano.

Finally, Allyson Anderson Book stressed how notable it is that Senator Bingaman and Dr. Simon set such a high priority on scientific excellence in how they staffed their personal offices and energy committee. They typically employed one to three geoscience-focused fellows on their collective staffs, which was not only good for crafting scientifically sound legislation, but also for providing a pathway for well-trained scientists to impact the political process. To quote Allyson, "this focus on science by Jeff and Bob led to the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee being called the "Dirksen National Laboratory", with Bob Simon being known as "The Professor".

For all of their past and ongoing achievements, it is our privilege to present Senator Jeff Bingaman and Dr. Bob Simon with a joint 2018 Earth Science Achievement Award in Public Policy.