

[back to story page](#)

Printed from ABQjournal.com, a service of the Albuquerque Journal

URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/state/aparmijo08-28-06.htm>

Monday, August 28, 2006

Auditor Candidate Won't Step Down, Despite Richardson's Concern

By **Tim Korte**/
Associated Press

Democratic state auditor candidate Jeff Armijo flatly rejected an overture Monday from Gov. Bill Richardson for a meeting to discuss whether Armijo should stay in the race amid sexual misconduct accusations by two women.

"I'm too damn independent. There are some people who don't understand that," Armijo said in a telephone interview while driving to a campaign stop in Artesia. "There's no way. I'm on the path to victory."

Earlier, Richardson's office issued a statement saying the governor was "extremely troubled" by the accusations against Armijo.

No charges have been filed in either alleged incident, one Aug. 3 and another in 2003. Bernalillo County District Attorney Kari Brandenburg said her office was reviewing the latest case to determine if charges are warranted.

"The governor is extremely troubled by the allegations. The fact that there are two different police reports with serious claims gives the governor significant concern," said Gilbert Gallegos, a spokesman for Richardson.

"The governor hopes to meet soon with Mr. Armijo to discuss the allegations and decide whether he should stay in the race."

Armijo said he couldn't comment on Richardson's statement because he hadn't seen it. But he strongly indicated he doesn't plan to withdraw.

Armijo also denied the accusations when news reports surfaced over the weekend.

"What I can say is I'm out here campaigning. And what a winning campaign is about is using your resources effectively," said Armijo, who faces Republican Lorenzo Garcia in the Nov. 7 election.

Unless Armijo changes his mind, he potentially could present Richardson with a political hand grenade this fall. Richardson, also a Democrat, is seeking a second term amid speculation he might pursue a presidential bid in 2008.

The allegations against Armijo also come with ethics issues in the forefront during this fall's campaign. Former Democratic state

Treasurer Robert Vigil faces a retrial starting Sept. 5 on federal extortion and conspiracy charges.

"The governor believes elected officials and candidates should be held to the highest ethical standards," Gallegos said.

State Democratic Party chairman John Wertheim said last weekend he was reviewing the Armijo matter but vowed the party "will not tolerate sexual violence of any kind."

Armijo, owner of an Albuquerque travel agency, said he's come too far to stop. He won the Democratic primary in June, defeating former fraud examiner and bank officer Thomas Buckner of Rio Rancho with 62 percent of the vote.

"I've gotten this far. I've built my business up, and I didn't have a rich angel donor," Armijo said.

Under state law, Armijo cannot be replaced on the ballot unless he resigns. The New Mexico Democratic Party then would call a meeting of its central committee, but the latest that could happen before the general election is Sept. 12.

Copyright ©2006 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

[Back to story page](#)