

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (10:00 p.m., Austin, Texas)

Ann W. Richards, 45th Governor of Texas, died in her Austin, Texas home today surrounded by her family. She is 73 years old. The cause of death is esophageal cancer.

Her four children survive her: Cecile, Daniel, Clark and Ellen and their spouses: Kirk Adams, Linda Richards, Sharon Zeugin and Greg Johnson and eight “nearly perfect” grandchildren.

Governor Richards, well known as a political powerhouse, was inaugurated Governor of Texas in January 1991. She was twice elected Texas State Treasurer after serving six years on the Travis County Commissioner’s Court.

She often said the hardest job she ever had was in 1955 as a public school teacher at Fulmore Junior High School in Austin.

Born in Lakeview, Texas in 1933 to Ona and Cecil Willis, Governor Richards spent her early adult life raising children and volunteering in Democratic Party politics. She worked in Washington, D.C., Dallas and Austin helping to elect progressive candidates who supported platforms of equality and social justice.

Governor Richards is one of the most important women in American history. She rose to political leadership at a time when she had to overcome stereotypes and artificial barriers to women’s participation. She ran for Governor saying, “We can do better for ourselves and our children.”

During her administration from 1991 until 1995:

- Texas led the nation for three years in a row in the number of increased manufacturing jobs and corporate relocations;
- She opened state government by appointing more women and minorities than all previous administrations;
- She oversaw the restructuring of the state public school finance system and instituted site-based decision-making in the public schools;
- She reformed the criminal justice system in Texas by reducing the number of violent criminals being paroled early and introduced a nationally respected substance-abuse program in Texas prisons;
- She was a great promoter of the State of Texas and all its resources propelling Texas to a top tourism destination and developing the emerging music and film industry.

Governor Richards hosted the official visits of the Queen of England, Elizabeth II with her royal delegation and the meeting of the President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas with the new President-Elect of the United States, Bill Clinton prior to his inauguration.

As Governor she was most proud of two actions that probably cost her re-election in 1994. She vetoed legislation that would allow people to carry concealed handguns, automatic weapons and “cop-killer bullets.” She also vetoed a bill that would have allowed the destruction of the environment over the sensitive Edwards Aquifer.

After leaving public office in 1995, Richards joined the Washington, D.C. based law firm of Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson and Hand. In 2001, Governor

Richards became a senior advisor at Austin based Public Strategies, Inc. working in both New York and Austin.

Ann Richards loved all of Texas and especially South Padre Island for fishing and celebrating Thanksgivings with her family and friends. She also loved cheering for the University of Texas Lady Longhorns Basketball team.

In her last ten years Governor Richards worked for many social causes close to her heart. She was actively pursuing the development of the **Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders** scheduled to open in Austin in 2007.

The family requests that memorial gifts be made to the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders through the **Austin Community Foundation, P.O. Box 5159, Austin, Texas 78763**, 512-472-4483, or by email:

www.austincommunityfoundation.org.

For more information, please contact the Richards family spokesperson, **Cathy Bonner**, 512-432-1948 or mobile, 512-656-4462.