New Mexico State Auditor Hector Balderas

Hector Balderas represents a new generation of leaders who are devoted to public service and are driving the country forward with innovation and a fresh perspective on governing. At the age of 33, Balderas sent shock waves through the political establishment when he was elected New Mexico State Auditor in November 2006. His election marked a milestone for both New Mexico and the nation, as Balderas became the youngest Hispanic statewide elected official in the country.

As New Mexico's State Auditor, Balderas provides regulatory oversight to over $60 billion dollars in governmental assets and 603 government entities. As the state's top government watchdog, Balderas has spent his first year in office aggressively combating fraud and financial abuse throughout New Mexico. Additionally, he has expanded the size and scope of the State Auditor's office by hiring criminal investigators, developing a fraud hotline and expanding training and outreach operations. In 2007, Balderas was named one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics by Hispanic Business magazine.

Balderas was raised in Wagon Mound, New Mexico, a village of 310 residents that has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the nation. He is the son of a foreign born immigrant father from Mexico and a mother who was raised in Wagon Mound. Growing up with both rural and international roots provided Balderas with a deep respect for people, an upbringing he has carried with him throughout his career. He was the first person in his family to earn a college degree, as well as the first person in Wagon Mound history to become an attorney. Balderas graduated from New Mexico Highlands University and earned his law degree in 2001 from the University of New Mexico.

After working his way through law school, Balderas decided against pursuing a career in the private sector and instead chose to follow his passion for public service. He accepted a job as an assistant district attorney in Albuquerque and quickly earned a reputation as a fierce advocate for protecting and balancing the many diverse interests within the justice system. In December 2003, Balderas moved back to his hometown of Wagon Mound with his wife and three young children to give back to his rural community. At the age of 29, and with no prior political experience, he ran for a seat in the New Mexico House of Representatives. Balderas defeated the heavily favored incumbent in the Democratic primary by a two-to-one margin and ultimately prevailed over his Republican opponent in the general election.

In his first term as a State Representative, Balderas passed sweeping legislation to strengthen penalties for sexual predators, establish investment incentives for clean energy and fund virtual education for rural public schools. Balderas also sponsored "truthful interrogations" legislation which gained national recognition as one of the most significant reforms to the criminal justice system. In recognition of his legislative accomplishments, Balderas was named Rookie-Leader-of-the-Year by the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and Outstanding Rookie by the League of Conservation Voters.

Also Balderas led the effort to amend the New Mexico Criminal Code to reflect consistency and parity in sentencing. He also advocated for DUI reform and led the fight to protect consumers from price gouging in times of emergency or disaster. The New Mexico State Bar Association acknowledged Balderas for his achievements by naming him Outstanding Young Lawyer of New Mexico.

Before completing his first legislative term, Balderas would go on to win statewide election for State Auditor. Balderas has traveled to Pakistan as a selected delegate for the American Council of Young Political Leaders. While in Pakistan, Balderas met with the country's Foreign Minister and leaders from all political parties to discuss developing better international relations and cooperation. In New Mexico, Balderas has hosted leadership delegations from China, Czech Republic, and several African nations to promote greater transparency and accountability in government.