

## Richardson woos coalition leaders

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Democrat Rep. Bill Richardson still is not sure what political office he will seek in 1990, but he is already courting a political faction whose candidate he once opposed.

Richardson met privately recently in Santa Fe with leaders of the northern New Mexico Rainbow Coalition, offering them both praise and money.

"He said he saw us as a new constituency within the Democratic Party," said Don Brayfield, a leader of the local Rainbow Coalition, which claims 126 dues-paying members.

"He offered us \$1,200 for an office or a computer, but he made it very clear that he was not attempting to buy us off, that the money would be with no strings attached," Brayfield said.

The Rainbow Coalition is the national organization founded several years ago by the Rev. Jesse Jackson to help him keep his own star ablaze within the Democratic Party.

Richardson for months has said he is considering several political options in 1990. One would be to seek election to a fifth term as representative in New Mexico's 3rd District. Another would be to challenge Republican Sen. Pete Domenici. Yet another would be to run for governor.

In a telephone interview from Mexico Thursday, Richardson said he liked the group's dedication and wanted to thank its leaders for their work, despite early differences over presidential candidates.

The congressman was a top official in the presidential campaign of Michael Dukakis, while Jackson competed for the Democratic Party's top nomination.

Jackson's campaign co-chair in New Mexico, Joe Johnson, became publicly upset in April when Richardson called Jackson "too liberal" and "unelectable." Johnson accused Richardson of previously having paid "lip service" to Jackson.

The local chapter of the Rainbow Coalition later worked for Dukakis and all other Democratic candidates in the November general election.

Richardson said he does not recall offering a specific amount of money to the group. "I told them I would be prepared to help them

finance purchase of something that would help them in their work. I said I think you should consider a computer," he said.

He said he periodically contributes to county Democratic organizations and to the state organization as part of his "party-building efforts."

He said he contributed several times to the local Rainbow Coalition during the past year's campaign. The last such contribution was to help the group pay for radio ads that endorsed Democratic candidates just before the Nov. 8 general election.

Richardson contributed \$300 to the ads; Sen. Jeff Bingaman, \$100; and the state Democratic Party, \$750, Brayfield said.

Richardson said he is not seeking special favors from the Rainbow Coalition. "My helping them is unrelated to what I want to do and who they want to support. There are no strings attached," he said.

Brayfield said Richardson told local Rainbow leaders that he decided against challenging the popular Domenici because he would be too tough to beat.

Richardson denied having ruled out any race, saying it will be next summer before he decides what he will do in 1990.

"I did not rule out running for the Senate although quite candidly, the governor's race is becoming more appealing to me," he said. "It's an office of enormous challenges and opportunities."

Corporation Commissioner Eric Serna, who has said he is a likely candidate for Richardson's congressional seat in 1990, responded cautiously to Richardson's courting of the local Rainbow Coalition.

Serna, like Johnson, was a co-chair of Jackson's presidential bid in the state this year. Serna also has paid the \$10 annual dues which the local Rainbow Coalition seeks from members.

"As long as it's truly without any strings attached, I'm encouraged that Bill is supportive of the various factions within the party," Serna said.

"I think Bill would make a fine gubernatorial candidate. In fact, the more his odds of running for governor increase, the more my odds of running for Congress increase," Serna said.