

## Gonzales selected for Aspen Institute fellowship program

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McALLEN, September 5 - State Rep. Veronica Gonzales, D-McAllen, has been selected to join the prestigious Aspen-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership.

The fellowship program honors public leaders that the Aspen Institute has identified as "the true rising stars" of American politics. The group selects 24 rising stars every two years, drawing from the ranks of federal, state, and local governments.

Prompted by 13th Court of Appeals Justice Dori Contreras Garza, Gonzales announced her selection at the monthly meeting of the Texas Democratic Women of Hidalgo County in McAllen on Wednesday evening.

"It's quite an honor to be nominated and then selected. There are only 24 selected, 12 Democrats and 12 Republicans. I am looking forward to participating," Gonzales told the Guardian, after the meeting.

Gonzales said the fellowship program meets about three times a year to discuss global and national issues, with the focus on developing good public policy, not politics.

"Being a member could include, possibly, a few trips outside of the country to see how government is run in the Middle East, or Europe," Gonzales said.

"Learning more and getting more viewpoints about how to establish good policy can only be an asset. I am looking forward to hearing the insights and thoughts of distinguished leaders from around the country."

Gonzales said she was not sure how nominated her but said it may have been state Rep. Rafael Anchia, D-Dallas, one of the 24 chosen for the inaugural class of the fellowship program in 2006.

Founded in 1950, the Aspen Institute is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue. It seeks to promote nonpartisan inquiry through seminars, policy programs, conferences and leadership development initiatives.

When the Aspen Institute started the Aspen-Rodel program, it conducted an eight-month search for the inaugural class of 24, involving input from 1,400 business, political and civic leaders.

It selected seven members of the U.S. Congress, two lieutenant governors, two state treasurers, two secretaries of state, an attorney general, a mayor, a city council member, a county council president, and seven state legislators. The 2007-08 class has yet to be officially announced.

The institute said the fellowship program was designed to bring together "the very best of the nation's emerging leaders" to discuss broad issues of democratic governance and effective public service.

"We are committed to getting past the narrow partisanship of contemporary politics and rebuilding a tradition of thoughtful dialogue and political civility," said the program's director, former U.S. Congressman Mickey Edwards.

Gonzales received a big round of applause after she announced her selection at the Texas Democratic Women of Hidalgo County meeting. 13th Court of Appeals Justice Linda Yañez said she believed Gonzales would become Texas' first Mexican-American governor.



State Representative Veronica Gonzales