

# Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall Unveiled at the State's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire



The beautiful Sangre de Cristo mountains served as a picturesque backdrop for the June 28 dedication of New Mexico's Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire.

The wall, a half-scale replica of the 500-foot-long national wall in our nation's capital, sits atop a hill overlooking the serene, peaceful Moreno Valley. Like the national wall, the replica wall features black granite panels engraved with the names of the 58,000 fallen U.S. service members from the war—including 398 New Mexicans.

"Today is a very special day for the state of New Mexico, our veterans, their families, friends, the community, and especially our Vietnam Veterans – welcome home," said DVS Cabinet Secretary Jamison Herrera, *(right photo)*

whose father and father-in-law are Vietnam War veterans. "I want to thank the executive branch of our government, legislators, the General Services Department and all of our cabinet secretaries...because it takes 'team New Mexico' to accomplish an objective like this. To get this done, there was lots of collaboration with our veterans' organizations, grass roots groups and every veteran who has a vote on how we honor those who have served before us."

The \$1.7 million project broke ground last summer after capital outlay funding and additional funds from the governor's office were received. Initial fundraising had begun through a privately financed project seven years earlier through a grass-roots effort started by Vietnam Veterans of America/Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 from Santa Fe.

"The amount of persistence and diligence shown by the Vietnam Veterans of America 996 through their lobbying, grass roots fundraising, and collection of donations was

tremendous," said Secretary Herrera. "I believe everybody here appreciates all of the blood, sweat and tears that went into this to make it a reality. Without you, your vision and tenacity, this would have never happened."

Lt. Gov. Howie Morales was the ceremony's main speaker. He said it is always special for him to be amongst veterans—especially those who served in Vietnam, as his father did.

"On behalf of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, myself, and our entire cabinet, this is our opportunity to say thank you for your service. It's our opportunity to recognize the struggles of what you, along with your families, have been through," said the lieutenant governor. "The reception our Vietnam veterans received when they came home is not something our country should be proud of. But I'm happy that we have been able to learn from it, so that we can now pay tribute to them."



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**Lt. Governor Howie Morales**

Jack McManus, the national president of Vietnam Veterans of America based, came from the national headquarters in Maryland.

“It is an honor for me to participate in this ceremony,” he said. “This is the perfect place for this memorial. It is serene, and it puts you at peace.”

State Representative Harry Garcia, who served with the Marine Corps in Vietnam along with two of his brothers, also attended the dedication. He worked legislatively on funding during the first round of the project.

“I am very happy that no one gave up on the vision for this memorial, because this wall means everything to us who served in Vietnam and lost friends and fellow service members,” said Rep. Garcia, from Cibola County. “I can’t put into words what it means to the families of the fallen.”

Vietnam War veteran John Garcia (*photo below*), the current Small Business Administration/New Mexico Division director, credited the veterans from VVA Chapter 996 for bringing the wall to what he called “this sacred place in New Mexico.”

“Let us reflect and pay respectful tribute to those who left their families to serve their country bravely when called upon --and wore the American uniform with honor in a foreign land called Vietnam,” said Garcia, who is also a former DVS cabinet secretary. “Today, we especially honor those who served our country and gave their lives in performance of their duty, whose names are etched on this wall.”



**John M. Garcia**  
*SBA New Mexico District Office Director/  
Vietnam War Army Veteran*



The Color Guard from Vietnam Veterans of America/ northern New Mexico Chapter 996 posted The Colors at the beginning of the dedication.

