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Ex-lawmaker to join college district board

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By Mary Beth Fallor
The Republic | azcentral.com
Fri Jan 31, 2014 11:32 PM

Former state legislator and gubernatorial candidate Alfredo Gutierrez was selected Friday to serve on the Maricopa County Community College District governing board.

Gutierrez, who will fill the vacancy created by the November death of Ben Miranda, will serve until Dec. 31.

Miranda's widow, state Rep. Catherine Miranda, D-Phoenix, also applied for the seat but was ruled ineligible because she is a legislator.

Gutierrez was among nine people who applied for the seat. A district committee selected finalists from among a list of applicants. The finalists were Gutierrez, Miranda and Carlos Galindo Elvira of Phoenix, chief development officer for the non-profit agency Valle del Sol.

They were interviewed by Don Covey, superintendent of schools for Maricopa County.

On Friday, Covey selected Gutierrez.

Gutierrez, who ran as a Democratic candidate for governor in 2002, said Friday that he sees continued growth and funding as two big issues affecting the community college system.

He noted that the state has given less money to the colleges and shifted more of the funding burden to property taxes.

He said the district's 10 colleges serve as an important bridge between high school and the universities.

"This institution should be thriving and strong," he said.

Miranda said Friday that she was told she was ineligible to serve on the community college board because she is a sitting legislator.

She said that, before she applied, she had found a law dating back several years that would have permitted her serving in both capacities.



"I thought that would cover it, but after further research, they dug into it and they found a more current law that found otherwise," Miranda said.

"I was honored to be one of the finalists."

Ben Miranda represented Legislative District 27 in the Arizona House from 2003 through 2010, and Catherine now holds that seat.

Gutierrez represents District 5 on the community college board, which comprises parts of Avondale, Buckeye, Glendale, Goodyear and Phoenix, as well as the Gila River Indian Community, Guadalupe, the Tohono O'odham Nation and Tolleson.

On Nov. 4, voters will choose the permanent board member. Gutierrez said he likely will run to keep the seat.

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The five-member governing board sets the policies of the district, which includes 138,000 students, 6,800 employees and a budget of \$1.7 billion.

The board members have the power to increase tuition and property taxes.

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