

AOC Becomes the Pete V. Domenici Science Operations Center



[CAPTION]

The NRAO's Array Operations Center in Socorro officially became the Pete V. Domenici Science Operations Center in a ceremony attended by its namesake on May 30. Pete Domenici, New Mexico's longest-serving U.S. Senator, is retiring next January after 36 years in the Senate. A longtime supporter of NRAO and of science in general, Domenici was instrumental in putting together the state-Federal deal that funded the building's construction more than 20 years ago. Over the years, his strong advocacy was essential for the success of the VLA, the VLBA and the EVLA project.

The building's new name "recognizes the strong and effective support for science that has been a hallmark of Senator Domenici's long career in public service," said NRAO Director Fred Lo. "Our observatory has had no better friend and champion than Senator Domenici. To a very great extent, the tools we have provided and will provide to the world's astronomers are a result of Senator Domenici's longstanding and steadfast support," Lo added.

Originally dedicated in 1988, the Pete V. Domenici Science Operations Center houses offices and laboratories that support VLA and VLBA operations, in addition to EVLA and ALMA development.

The May 30 ceremony featured remarks by Lo, AUI President Ethan Schreier, Cambridge (UK) University's Physics Department head Peter Littlewood, and Van Romero, Vice President for Research and Economic Development at New Mexico Tech. The building sits on the NM Tech campus and is owned by the university. The ceremony was a joint effort of the two institutions.

Sen. Domenici, in his remarks, reiterated his support for research as a vital part of the nation's future, and praised NRAO and NM Tech for their efforts and their cooperation.

At the close of the ceremony, Domenici, Lo and Romero jointly triggered small explosive charges that cut the ropes on a large curtain, dropping the curtain and revealing the new name on the building's front wall.

The day began with a tour of NM Tech's Magdalena Ridge Observatory atop South Baldy, southwest of Socorro and 10,400 feet high. Sen. Domenici, along with NRAO and NM Tech visitors, saw that facility's 2.4-meter telescope and the building that will house the beam combiner for an optical interferometer. The party then returned to the NM Tech campus aboard Blackhawk helicopters provided by the NM National Guard.

David G. Finley