

Manuel "Manny" Cortez

April 29, 1939—June 18, 2006

Elected 1976, 1978, 1982, 1986

Manuel Cortez helped transform Las Vegas and Clark County into a destination for visitors from around the globe through his time on the Clark County Commission and later his leadership of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA).

Cortez was born in April of 1939 in Las Cruces, New Mexico. His father worked as a baker and his mother in retail. In 1944, the family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. Cortez went on to graduate from Las Vegas High School. He then attended Nevada Southern University, the predecessor to UNLV. Cortez served in the US Army during the Korean War.



Before being named to the Taxicab Authority in 1973 by Governor O'Callaghan, Cortez worked as an investigator at the Clark County District Attorney's Office and as a polygraph examiner in the Public Defender's Office. During his time as the head of the Taxicab Authority, Cortez gained prominence in the city as tough negotiator. In 1976, Cortez quit the Taxicab Authority to run for County Commission.

Despite facing a number of other Democrats in the primary, Cortez won a seat on the Commission. Voters reelected him in 1978, 1982 and 1986. During his time on the Commission, Cortez helped redevelop Cashman Field and bring a Triple A baseball team to Las Vegas. He worked tirelessly to develop the reputation of Las Vegas. The Clark County School District honored him in 1999 when they named an elementary school after him.

Cortez began serving on the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority while a commissioner. Following his retirement from the Commission, Cortez became chairman of Board of Directors of the LVCVA, a position he held from 1983-1990. In 1991, he became the Executive Director of the LVCVA, serving from 1991 until he retired in 2004. While at the LVCVA, Cortez saw the incredible rise in tourism in Las Vegas: the number of visitors to Las Vegas more than doubled. Cortez helped Las Vegas recover after the September 11th attacks caused a decline in visitation. He also oversaw the "What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas" campaign.

In 2004, Cortez retired from the LVCVA. He opened his own political consulting firm in 2005. Cortez was active in various civic and philanthropic groups including the Boys and Girls Club. On June 18, 2006, Cortez died at home unexpectedly of a heart attack. In November of that year, his daughter, Catherine Cortez Masto, was elected Attorney General of the state of Nevada.