

## **Latino state senator to bow out of politics;**

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### **Body**

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**State** Sen. Sam Zamarripa, an Atlanta Democrat who was a key player in this year's heated legislative debate over illegal immigration, announced Wednesday that he will not seek re-election this year.

Zamarripa, a 53-year-old investment banker, said he has decided to **bow out** of **politics** to focus on spurring economic development --- particularly global business opportunities --- in Atlanta. He said his decision had nothing to do with the controversy over illegal immigration.

"My feeling was that the greatest opportunity for me was to pursue things I am very good at related to economic development, and to do that **out** of the Senate," Zamarripa said at a Capitol news conference.

After making a name for himself as an activist with ties to Atlanta's business community, in 2002 Zamarripa was among three men who became the first Latinos elected to the Legislature. This year, the second-generation Mexican-American became the unofficial face of the opposition to Senate Bill 529, one of the most controversial proposals introduced during the recent legislative session.

That measure, which awaits Gov. Sonny Perdue's signature to become law, seeks to crack down on illegal immigrants and those who hire them, mostly by verifying the legal status of adults applying for taxpayer-provided services in Georgia and by removing tax breaks for anyone who employs undocumented workers.

Zamarripa opposed the bill, arguing that the federal government ought to handle illegal immigration issues.

He voted against it in the Senate, but he worked with the bill's sponsor, Sen. Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), to soften the proposal's impact.

"I hate to see Sam go," Rogers said. "He and I worked together not just on that issue, but on a couple of others. Although the public would sense we are diametrically opposed, we're not. We agree on a number of pro-business issues. I enjoyed my time working with him."

Zamarripa said Wednesday that he was most pleased with his work on the Senate Economic Development Committee during his four years as an elected official.

There, he sponsored successful legislation that encourages the People's Republic of China to invest in Georgia and build strong business relationships that will create jobs and encourage economic growth in the **state**.

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The lawmaker said he plans to continue his work in that area both within his private business and as a volunteer for the city and **state**.

He also said that he has not ruled **out** future political runs, and plans to stay active within the Democratic party.

He's said he has signed up to help New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson if he runs for president in 2008, and is supporting Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor's gubernatorial campaign in Georgia this year.

## Graphic

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Photo: BEN GRAY / StaffState Sen. Sam Zamarripa (D-Atlanta) says he is **bowing out** to focus on business.

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