



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

For Immediate Release
January 17, 2006

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Governor Bill Richardson Outlines Year of the Child Agenda

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today presented his fourth State of the State address to New Mexicans. The text follows:

I. Introduction

To Lt. Governor Denish, Senate Pro Tem Altamirano, and Speaker Lujan;
To Senator Bingaman and Congressman Udall;
To Pueblo Governors and President Shirley;
To Democratic and Republican leaders, members of the Legislature, and members of the judiciary;
To the former Governors, distinguished guests, and our First Lady, my wife, best friend, and lifelong partner, Barbara;
And to my fellow New Mexicans: Thank you and welcome.

II. Mission Statement—Bringing People Together to Move New Mexico Forward

I stand before you today the proud governor of a state that is strong, and growing stronger by the day.

New Mexico is moving forward, away from the past where the status quo was accepted, where arcane policies held us back, and where gridlock impeded our progress.

We are moving forward towards a future full of promise, opportunity, and a greater quality of life for every person.

A future where every child can grow up healthy, attend world-class schools, go to a good college, get a good-paying job, and raise their family right here in New Mexico.

And a future where we can invest in people, not programs; opportunities, not bureaucracy; and where we can demand responsibility and accountability from ourselves and from every citizen.

We have not reached our destination yet. But we are well on our way.

We've made promises, and we've kept them. For the child in Clovis, the single mom in Las Cruces, the retiree in Gallup, the father with two jobs and too little time for his family in Chama, and so many more—we owe it to every New Mexican to continue our path.

Who we are defines what we do.

We are pro-growth and pro-business: We've used our entrepreneurial spirit to create jobs, to cut taxes for every New Mexican and for small businesses, and to bring cutting edge industry to our state—such as film and media, aviation and aerospace, and groundbreaking high-tech businesses.

We are westerners too: our heritage and respect for individual rights has helped us preserve and protect our land, water, and air. We have a fierce regard for culture and tradition, and even more so for personal responsibility. We don't wait for others to act, we do it ourselves.

We are diverse: we're a multi-cultural capital that, in many ways, resembles the future of our country. In the past, we were disregarded, ignored, or considered as outsiders. But that's why we all know the importance of opening doors, investing in opportunity, and giving a helping hand. It's why we focus so much on improving education, job training, homeownership, and economic opportunity.

The results speak for themselves. Better schools, better jobs, more money in people's pockets, and a healthier, safer New Mexico.

It's a great start. But we've got plenty more to do, and together we're going to get it done.

The budget I propose this year builds on these accomplishments, and builds a stronger foundation for our future. It's bold, balanced, and fiscally responsible. There will be no feeding frenzy on tax dollars this year.

I believe that government has an obligation to be fiscally responsible, and be prepared for unforeseen events or economic downturns. That's why we need to put money away. I also believe that when government has the resources, it should return those resources to taxpayers, invest in people, and invest in the future.

The budget I propose meets both of these critical goals.

It preserves the largest surplus in New Mexico history—more than \$500 million dollars. It would keep our budget reserves at 10 percent, and strengthen our already terrific bond rating. And with this budget, I will continue to fight against reckless spending, and demand accountability for taxpayers' money.

Our budget will also invest in people, and in our future—towards education, health care, public safety, and job growth. We want to make our schools even better, make college more affordable, keep kids healthier and safer, and make our high-wage economy even stronger.

III. Year of the Child

In New Mexico, 2006 is the Year of the Child.

I want to thank the Lt. Governor for her leadership in supporting and protecting children.

In this session, we will make important choices about our future. We will reinforce our commitment to New Mexico's children, and to generations yet to come—an enduring legacy to last long past these 30 days.

When I was a young boy, my mother helped bridge my connection between two cultures as I grew up. My *abuelita* (my grandmother) made sure I went to catechism and made me say my prayers each night. And my father pushed me to stay focused on school, demanding results along the way.

Later, in college, I remember professors who helped me realize my potential and ignited my intellectual curiosity.

If none of these things had happened, I doubt I'd be standing here before you today. (Maybe some of you would have liked it better that way...)

But I am here with all of you. And each one of us would most likely not be here today, but for the grace and guidance of others—parents, teachers, mentors, role models.

And now, it's our duty to repay the debt we owe those who have helped us along the way. We owe it to the generations that follow—the kids across this state—to create better schools, better communities, and an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

MAKING SCHOOLS WORK

We start by making our schools work.

We've made a lot of progress in the last three years, earning a top ten ranking in standards and accountability. Our efforts to improve teacher quality rank 17th in the nation—up from 30th. We've moved up seven spots for teacher salaries, and created voluntary pre-kindergarten opportunities for 1,500 children. But we're not done yet.

Making schools work requires strong partnerships, among parents, teachers, administrators, schools, community leaders, lawmakers, and the business community—starting at the beginning.

Kids who have access to pre-kindergarten have a better chance to succeed in school, get into college, and get a good-paying job later in life. However, we also know that too many of our children begin school under-prepared. Instead of a head start in life, they're too often already a step behind. The achievement gap in our schools exists for many kids before they even start Kindergarten.

To ensure this doesn't happen in New Mexico, I propose to expand access to Pre-Kindergarten, double the funding, and serve nearly 3,000 kids statewide. Many of the staunchest critics are now supporters. And many providers, who were once skeptical of pre-K, are now declaring it a success and calling for access for more kids.

Rapid growth is a good sign—a sign of economic progress and job creation. But when some schools are 50 percent above capacity, that simply doesn't work. Teachers struggle to teach, kids find it hard to learn, and our schools fall behind. We won't let this happen, because we can invest now, and build schools in high growth areas in rural and urban New Mexico—in places like Deming, Las Cruces, Gadsden, Rio Rancho, and Los Lunas.

And there must be accountability in the process. Schools will be built on budget, and on time.

In addition to investing in new schools in high-growth areas, we also want to modernize and improve existing schools across the state. At the end of this four year span, working together with this Legislature, we will have invested more than \$1 billion dollars in newer, better, and more modern schools. One-billion dollars.

We also need to recruit and retain quality teachers. We've made great strides in New Mexico, but we have more work to do. That's why I'm calling for a 6 percent pay increase for all teachers and instructional personnel. Coupled with our innovative three-tier licensure system, New Mexico will not only have quality teachers, but will also hold them accountable for results.

A few weeks ago, I had the honor of announcing the grades New Mexico received in the 2006 Quality Counts report card. The good news is that we're seeing positive results—ranking higher than most states for standards and accountability, improving teacher quality and resource equity.

These grades are proven indicators of better student performance and critical first steps to successful schools.

However, despite our progress, we still have more work to do.

One glaring weakness in our schools is parental involvement. We need to break down the barriers between parents and schools, to reach out, to engage moms, dads and in many cases, grandparents who are called into action to raise their grandchildren.

My budget proposes innovative strategies to involve parents in their kid's education. We need effective partnerships with parents to make our schools work.

Too often our schools are plagued with bureaucratic obstacles that stand in the way of success. To make sure New Mexico students are fully prepared, I call for a new commitment to match high school curricula with college entrance exams. The tests to get out of high school should match the tests to get into college.

While it is a positive sign that more students are on track to get a college education, many cannot afford the rising costs of tuition.

I call for the Legislature to join me in supporting a major investment in the College Affordability endowment that we created last year. The endowment would generate money for need-based scholarships for students who cannot afford college tuition. This investment could help nearly 40-thousand students in New Mexico—including non-traditional students, like the 65-year old woman I met recently who just graduated from law school.

Every New Mexican should have the opportunity to take advantage of higher education.

For those students whose career path may not include college, we have a responsibility to provide equal opportunities to succeed. We will continue developing and supporting Career Technical Centers and Vocational Charter High Schools to provide technical training and 21st Century career skills.

HEALTHY KIDS

For kids to be successful in school, we must first ensure that they grow up healthy.

We've made great strides in keeping New Mexico's kids healthy—improving the immunization rate from near the bottom up to 15th in the country, putting more doctors and nurses in our schools, and enrolling more families in the state's affordable health insurance plan. But we need to do more.

A healthy start includes immunization. Five years ago, only 61 percent of our kids were immunized. Now, we're up to 85 percent, thanks in large part to the tremendous efforts from our wonderful First Lady, my wife, Barbara. But we can't rest on our success. We should aim to immunize every child. And one way to help get there is dispatching more shot teams to regions around the state.

A healthy start also includes health insurance. Unfortunately, too many of our kids don't have it—21,000 kids 5 years old or younger. This is unacceptable, and no one in this

room should tolerate it. Which is why we should work toward the goal of insuring all kids under 5 years old.

Physical activity and nutrition are also critical elements to keeping New Mexico's children healthy and fit.

Every elementary student in New Mexico should have access to physical education at least once a day. Research shows a direct link between academic success and physical fitness. So I propose that we hire 200 additional physical education teachers for our schools.

We should also ensure that every elementary student can have a healthy breakfast – every day, without exception.

Additional before- and after- school programs will also help decrease child obesity, expand physical activity, and increase parent and community involvement in schools. The economic burden of chronic disease associated with obesity costs New Mexico \$324 million dollars a year. The price of inaction on this issue is simply too high. We know what we need to do, and we will do it.

And, finally, in the Year of the Child, we will get junk food out of our schools. Get it all out.

It's bad for kids, bad for their academic performance, and even worse for their health. We're setting standards this month to get junk food out of elementary schools, eliminate carbonated drinks from middle schools, and require healthy snacks in both middle and high schools.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of Senator Jeff Bingaman on this issue. His leadership on the federal level has been an essential part of our progress.

A SAFER NEW MEXICO

While keeping New Mexico's children healthy is critical, the most sacred responsibility that I have—that we all have—is to keep children safe. Sadly, too often the scourge of gangs, drugs, sex offenders, and child abuse creeps into our neighborhoods and communities. These are constant threats, and we must remain vigilant. I will not tolerate anything less than a full commitment to making New Mexico safe for our children and our families.

We will continue to attack the meth problem, and its root causes. Meth is one of the fastest growing threats to our kids. It's a public safety problem, a health problem, and an economic problem. We've already taken strong action, and shut down more than 400 meth labs. But there is more to do. And while we've seen a decline in meth-related deaths, we must continue our fight against meth.

We want to increase penalties for the sale of meth, or intent to sell, and make it the same criminal level as other lethal drugs like heroin and cocaine. We should create a statewide registry of meth-affected properties so that homebuyers, homeowners, and neighbors don't unknowingly endanger themselves or their families. And treatment should be provided for the first time for meth addicts—so people have the chance to overcome the terrible grip of addiction.

We must toughen penalties for sex offenders—including life in prison without the possibility for parole for sex crimes against children, even for first time offenders when necessary. Because we cannot risk putting our children in danger.

As kids get older, gangs and drugs threaten to become part of their lives. But we will fight this every step of the way. We need to strengthen sentences for anyone convicted of gang-related crimes, and toughen penalties for recruiting minors into gangs. And kids need more access to constructive activities, like expanded after-school and summer literacy programs.

IV. Moving New Mexico Forward

While our primary focus is New Mexico's children, we cannot neglect our responsibilities on other critical issues, like jobs, health care, energy, environment, and public safety. There is too much momentum and too much opportunity to just sit back and rest on our successes. So, in addition to the Year of the Child agenda, I want to lay out five critical challenges we must tackle.

ECONOMY

The first is our economy. We've charged ahead with our state's economic progress—bringing us into the 21st Century, and becoming a national leader in job growth.

Together, we've:

- Helped put 50,000 more New Mexicans to work since taking office
- Cut taxes for high-tech companies, small businesses, and middle- and low-income families
- Eliminated the food tax, and the tax on most medical services
- Provided gasoline rebates and home-heating assistance
- Expanded trade with Asia and Mexico dramatically
- And increased business start-ups and expanded Main Street Program investments to 28 communities

But now, we must not stop our bold reforms and aggressive changes. We simply can't afford the status quo.

So we will keep pushing forward with additional tax cuts.

The centerpiece of our tax-cut package is the New Mexico Working Families Tax Credit—modeled after the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which has a 30-year record of success and wide bipartisan support. We could help as many as 150-thousand middle- and low-income families, especially those with children. This tax credit will reward

work, and help working families—who earn between \$12-thousand and \$36-thousand dollars. These families are the heart and soul of our economy, and our communities.

We also want to continue to make it easier to do business in New Mexico -- by eliminating the gross receipts tax on hospitals, targeting small, rural communities, and easing the tax burden on small businesses.

The surcharge on nursing homes has bridged the gap created by the federal government's refusal to help elderly New Mexicans with their healthcare needs. Now it's time to repeal that surcharge.

We will continue to build strong economic momentum—like the cutting edge agreement the State negotiated with Virgin Galactic to build the world's first spaceport for commercial space flight. It's a promising endeavor for New Mexico, with a projected long-term economic impact of \$752 million dollars and nearly 5,800 jobs.

The Spaceport—perhaps more than any other project—represents the future of economic development. It serves as a symbol of our aggressive efforts, a calling for future leaders in science and technology, and as an inspiration for the American entrepreneurial spirit.

We will also continue building, promoting, and growing our film and media arts industry. Our efforts have already yielded thousands of jobs for New Mexicans, \$500 million dollars in economic impact, and nearly 40 feature film productions since I took office.

We will create the Advanced Energy Manufacturing Tax Credit. This will encourage cutting edge advanced energy technology firms to make New Mexico their home—fostering a clean high-wage industry, creating good jobs, and protecting our natural resources.

We should double the funding for the Economic Development Partnership, which has already been responsible for 10 relocation deals, nearly 3,500 high-wage jobs, and \$123 million dollars in new investment in the two years since it began.

I am also supporting an innovative, bipartisan initiative that encourages working New Mexicans to save money – in an effort to boost home ownership and educational opportunities. The idea is for the state to contribute to Family Opportunity Accounts, which will benefit working, low-income families who open a bank account, place regular savings into that account and successfully complete a financial literacy course.

Finally, in New Mexico, it is time to enact a meaningful increase for the minimum wage. Put simply, it makes good economic sense. Now, I know this is a contentious issue, but it doesn't have to be divisive. I will work together with the different stakeholders, and I am sensitive to the business community. But if we are to continue building a high-wage economy—which I am intent on doing—we need a meaningful wage for an honest day's work. So, I will support a phased increase to \$7-dollars and 50-cents an hour.

Another important element of our economic development efforts is transportation. The original GRIP program is creating thousands of good-paying jobs and millions of dollars in new investment all over the state. We must continue this progress.

I am calling for GRIP II—a partnership with local communities, designed to help fund much-needed road projects in every part of the state. This kind of investment is good for New Mexico businesses; it sparks job growth; and creates safer, cleaner roads and highways.

A critical aspect of our economy that we cannot, and must not, forget about is Cannon Air Force Base. Cannon represents the cornerstone of eastern New Mexico's economy. Last year, despite the Pentagon's recommendation to close it and the long odds we faced, we managed to keep Cannon open—at least until 2010. I personally met with every member of the BRAC Commission. And worked together with our congressional delegation to make sure we honored the men and women who serve at Cannon with our best effort. I want to pay a special thanks to Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman, and Congressman Tom Udall, as well as the rest of the New Mexico congressional delegation. I also want to thank and acknowledge the tremendous work done by the Clovis and Portales community.

The key now is finding a new mission for Cannon. It's vitally important that we move as quickly as possible to resolve this, provide continuity, and give some assurance to local businesses and communities. I've met with Air Force officials to discuss possible solutions, and let them know that the state is prepared to do everything we can and provide whatever assistance is needed to secure a permanent mission for Cannon. Today, I ask the Legislature for the resources to double the size of the base—which will help increase the opportunities for new missions.

HEALTH CARE

The second challenge impacts everyone—fixing health care in New Mexico.

We want to expand eligibility for child care in New Mexico to help serve an additional 1,000 families. We know that quality, affordable child care is one of the most significant ways to allow parents to retain good-paying jobs and to pursue continuing education. It's good for families, good for the health of our state, and good for our economy.

We also want to expand prenatal care to help get an additional 1,200 pregnant women the assistance they need. This is a critical health and quality of life need, and should not be overlooked.

Our medical life-saving services must also be improved. We will improve our state's three existing trauma centers in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Farmington; and help other medical centers expand much-needed trauma capacity.

Additionally, we are expanding health services through bold initiatives with Telehealth—helping get more services to more New Mexicans in rural communities.

HONORING OUR MILITARY

Our third challenge is making sure we are there to help the men and women of our military, and their families.

We will renew our commitment to provide \$400-thousand dollars in life insurance for every active duty member of New Mexico's National Guard. Since we began this effort one year ago, I'm proud to report that not only has the federal government finally increased the military death benefit, but nearly 40 states have also pursued similar initiatives to help our military families.

As New Mexico's military men and women remain in harm's way around the world, the toll on soldiers and their families becomes clearer every day. We hope and pray that they all come home safe. But we know that is not always the case. Since September 11th, we've lost 16 soldiers in Iraq, and 4 others in Afghanistan.

- New Mexico National Guard Sgt Marshal Westbrook
- Marine Lance Cpl Chad Robert Hildebrandt
- Private First Class Lori Piestewa
- Private First Class Mario Reyes
- Army Cpl Lyle Cambridge
- Air Force Special Forces 1st Lt Jeremy Fresques
- Reserve Marine Lance Cpl Jonathan Grant
- Army Staff Sergeant Joseph Rodriguez
- Marine Cpl Christopher Adlesperger
- Army Specialist Jeremy Christensen
- Army Specialist Christopher Merville
- Marine Sgt Moses Rocha
- Army Sgt Tommy Gray
- Marine Lance Cpl Aaron Austin
- Marine Lance Cpl Christopher Ramos
- Army Specialist James "Heath" Pirtle
- Air Force Major Steven Plumhoff
- Air Force 1st Lt Tamara Long Archuleta
- Army Sgt 1st Class Christopher James Speer
- Senior Airman Jason Cunningham

We all owe them, and their families, a debt of gratitude that we can never repay. But we can honor them by forever remembering their sense of duty, their heroism, and their selflessness.

Please join me in a moment of silence to honor New Mexico's fallen sons and daughters.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Our commitment to safety and security abroad must be matched by efforts to keep our streets, neighborhoods, and communities safe and secure as well. This is the fourth challenge we face.

We've done a lot so far. We've been aggressive, tough, and bold. And we have the results to prove it.

- Violent crime has dropped by 7 percent.
- Alcohol-related fatal accidents have dropped by 13 percent.
- And New Mexico is the first state in the country to require ignition interlocks for first-time DWI offenders.

But the road to a better, safer future does not end just because we've made positive changes.

We have the toughest DWI laws in the country, and are now a national model for the National Highway Safety and Transportation Administration. But we still have miles to go to eliminate the dangerous and tragic impact it has in our communities.

We must embrace innovation if we're going to continue to get drunk drivers off of our streets.

In communities like San Juan County, they are pairing mandatory jail time and treatment for first time offenders. This is proving to be the most effective way to stop repeat offenders. We propose funding a pilot program to expand this model to other counties with the highest DWI rates.

We will continue the Drunkbusters Hotline—which we just kicked off—that gives citizens a direct link to law enforcement and helps make patrols more efficient and effective. We will aggressively prosecute sales to minors and intoxicated people. We will provide grants to local communities to help combat underage drinking, offer alternative sentencing, and to bolster enforcement and treatment. We will increase the timeliness of DWI hearings, to prevent backlogs, and reduce the potential for dismissals.

Violence in the home leaves an indelible scar on families. To combat it, we will increase penalties, enact substitute addresses for victims, and pay for domestic violence prevention centers, victim protection units, training, and additional personnel.

We cannot keep our communities safe without recruiting, training, and retaining our state police officers. We can't afford to have our officers leaving state police for higher paying jobs. So I am proposing a bold pay package for state law enforcement—with pay increases of up to 20 percent.

These brave men and women are on the front lines in our fight against crime and violence, gangs and drugs. They are the ones patrolling streets and highways for drunk drivers. And they are ones keeping our communities safe, especially in rural areas. We need to recruit and retain our officers, and this pay package will do exactly that.

We cannot have safe communities without secure borders. I've said before that border security is and should be a federal issue. But protecting New Mexicans is our responsibility.

Last year, we took a major step forward to secure our borders and curb illegal immigration—declaring a State of Emergency for our border counties and hiring additional law enforcement to keep New Mexico citizens safe. We will continue the state's support for those border communities.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

The fifth challenge is continuing our push as the Clean Energy State.

New Mexico is home to pristine land, natural beauty, and world-class energy resources. This year, our energy and environmental priorities include three critical initiatives: creating a Land Conservation Fund to support open land, wildlife, and clean energy projects for ranchers, hunters, anglers, and local communities; establishing a tax credit to expand solar energy development in homes and businesses; and creating the Renewable Energy Transmission Authority to seize the huge market potential for clean energy.

Clean energy and preservation measures hold a lot of promise—for both our economy and our environment.

V. Conclusion

And now, your favorite part: the conclusion.

At the end of four years, I want the people of New Mexico to know—without a doubt—that I delivered on my promise to move our state forward. I was elected to make a difference and to create opportunities for New Mexicans. And that's what we've done—the Governor and the Legislature--together.

The attitude in the state has changed since we started on this path three years ago. Pessimism has turned to optimism. Obstacles have turned into opportunities. And gridlock has turned into action—non-stop action. That's why, as I report for the fourth time on the State of the State, most New Mexicans—by an overwhelming margin—feel our state is finally moving forward in the right direction.

That optimism is a reflection of this Legislature working together with me to move New Mexico forward.

But it's going to take more than four years of hard work and progress to put all of our schools on the right path, to sustain our high-wage economy, and put an end to drunk drivers on our roads.

It's going to take more hard work, more progress, and more action.

Here today is an agenda of relentless action. It reflects who we are, what we're willing to do to help the people we serve, and how we're taking New Mexico into the future.

El Año del Niño -- The Year of the Child.

Mejorando Nuestras Escuelas -- Making Schools Work.

Manteniendo Buena Salud Para Los Niños -- Keeping Kids Healthy.

Un Nuevo México Mas Seguro -- A Safer New Mexico.

Y Moviendo Nuevo México Adelante -- Moving New Mexico Forward.

Behind these words are detailed plans, specific proposals, and a bold yet fiscally responsible budget that achieves each common goal.

Our state has never been stronger financially. Not only are the state's budget reserves and bond ratings at record highs, but the Permanent Funds are approaching \$13 billion dollars. Thanks to good financial stewardship, those Rainy Day Funds are \$4 billion dollars higher than when I took office, which enabled us to invest \$1.5 billion dollars in New Mexico schools and communities.

I respectfully ask the Legislature to be my partner on this bold agenda, in this time of opportunity. Let who we are define what we do.

After all, what is more pro-business and entrepreneurial than preparing a whole generation of kids to succeed and prosper 5-, 10-, or 20-years from now?

What embodies our respect for individual rights more than our right to clean air, pristine land, and safe drinking water?

What symbolizes personal responsibility better than a system of laws that protects the innocent, and deters and punishes those who would endanger or harm kids, seniors, and our most vulnerable neighbors?

What reflects our diversity greater than willingness to open doors for others, to provide opportunities, and to reward hard work and success?

And what portrays our desire to move New Mexico forward better than a government willing to make bold changes for the benefit of the people it serves?

We all know the answers to these questions. We all know what we need to do this session. Now, together, let's get to work, and let's get it done.

Thank you, good luck, and God bless the people of New Mexico.