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The First Gathering of New Mexican Indian Boards and Commissions

Santa Fe, NM: Governor Richardson has kept his campaign promise of appointing Indians to key positions in his administration and appointing Indians to State Boards and Commissions.

Since January, Governor Richardson has appointed more than 65 Indians to State Boards and Commissions. More Indians have been appointed to boards and commissions by Governor Richardson than by any other governor in New Mexico's history. Today, the appointees gathered at the State capitol where they strategized about their roles on boards and commissions; discussed how to best serve their constituents' needs; and how to maintain the delicate balance between State responsibilities, tribal responsibilities, and an individual's traditional beliefs. Among those in attendance at this historic gathering were Speaker Lawrence Morgan of the Navajo Nation, Governor Stuart Paisano of Sandia Pueblo, Representative Roger Madalena (Pueblo of Jemez), Bernie Teba, Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department, Conroy Chino, Secretary of Labor, Governor Tom Talaché (Pueblo of Nambé)--Chairman of the Commission on Indian Affairs, Governor Roland Johnson of Laguna Pueblo, and Lynn Roanhorse, Secretary of the Commission on Indian Affairs and assistant to the President of the Jicarrilla Apache Nation.

Bernie Teba, Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department explained that the Commission of Indian Affairs and the Indian Affairs Department have undergone a strategic planning process to better define their unique missions, goals, and objectives. Mr. Teba urged the members of boards and commissions to go through a similar strategic planning process to improve the focus of their board or commission. Mr. Teba also asked the appointees not to forget the Native American component on their boards and commissions.

Mr. Teba stressed responsibility and accountability to the appointees. "You have a responsibility as a New Mexico citizen for the overall good of the State, but to use your role to also educate, inform and represent the Native American perspective."

The keynote speaker was Linda Lovejoy (Navajo Nation) of the Public Regulatory Commission who stressed that she was thrilled to see so many Native Americans on boards and commissions. She urged the appointees to work hard, gather as much

information as they can, and use that information to advance their communities and all the communities of New Mexico. She told the appointees “We have doctors, lawyers, dentists, superintendents, and teachers in this room. So many of you here have the education and qualifications to head state agencies. You also have the qualifications to hold elected office.” Ms. Lovejoy was honored with award for her many years of outstanding service to the Navajo Nation and to New Mexico, by Mary Begay, representing Iyanbito Chapter, and Speaker Lawrence Morgan of the Navajo Nation.

Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish greeted the appointees and reiterated the Governor’s commitment to working with the Indian tribes and citizens of the State. Presentations were made by Daniel Maki and Art Jaramillo of the Governor’s Office on Boards and Commissions and Secretary of Labor Conroy Chino, Representative Roger Madalena, and Governor Roland Johnson of Laguna Pueblo spoke on “Native Americans in State Government: Maintaining the Balance”.

One of the members of the planning committee for this gathering Alvin Warren (Pueblo of Santa Clara) was happy about the turnout of this historic gathering and the ensuing dialogue. “We have only begun. We have a lot of work ahead of us.” The appointees will be honored this evening at a reception at the Museum of Indian Art and Culture.