

State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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**GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON SAYS PROTECT THE
FORMULA, PROTECT THE KIDS**

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today urged legislators to pay for children's health care, while still funding key tobacco cessation programs.

The governor made the following statement during a news conference today:

Today I have two messages. One: all existing programs funded from the tobacco fund will continue to be funded. Two: If the legislature fails to pass my plan, New Mexico will lose over \$1.3 billion in federal funding over the next nine years and over 60,000 children could lose their health insurance.

It took us three years to accumulate nearly \$60 million in our tobacco fund. Investing that money in Medicaid for our children and our seniors will bring us a federal match of \$180 million. In other words, we can collect in the next nine months what it would take us the next nine years to accumulate.

Children are a priority and our budget should reflect our priorities. We can't afford to throw away over \$1.3 billion dollars in matching funds to preserve a formula. You can protect the formula or protect our kids. I vote to protect our kids. I vote to insure our children. I ask the legislature to vote with me.

One of my key goals is to provide health care for New Mexican children. That is a priority. The key to our success lies in the willingness of the legislature to include the tobacco settlement funds in the general fund to assist us in paying for Medicaid.

Last year the legislature voted to continue the eligibility level of children at 235% of the federal poverty level. Governor Johnson vetoed that bill. My message to the legislature is simple. If we are going to provide health care insurance for our kids, pass my plan.

If we are going to insure our kids, you can't deny me the tools to do it. You can't have it both ways. You can't keep eligibility at current levels, and refuse to allocate the money to pay for it.

Here are the numbers. The state is expected to pay \$3,576 per year for each child on Medicaid. The \$60 million currently sitting in tobacco permanent fund, once invested, will be matched by 180 million dollars.

If we leave that money in the permanent fund, we're losing out on 240 million dollars that could be used to pay for the health care of 67-thousand children who need it now. And if we use the tobacco money for health care over the next 10 years, we will draw another \$1.3 billion in federal money to help our children and our poorest citizens.

Here's what we get for our investment in New Mexico's children:

- No-cost or low-cost health care coverage for children under the age of 19.
- Preventive services, such as tot-to-teen health checks, and immunizations. Those include regular check-ups, doctor visits, dental visits, hospital care, prescriptions, eye-glasses and hearing and vision exams.

Before a child turns 2, he or she will get:

- Three polio vaccinations
- One vaccination to prevent measles, mumps and rubella.
- Two flue shots
- Three hepatitis shots
- One chicken pox vaccine

Children with Ashma get:

- Long-term services and medication

Women will benefit from:

- Breast cancer screening
- Pre-natal and postpartum care
- Birth services, such as C-sections

And as far as drug prescriptions go:

- Last year Medicaid paid for one-and-a-half million drug prescriptions between the three big HMO's.
- Cost: Over 50-million dollars

I also want to emphasize this important point. Under our proposal, the money for tobacco-related illnesses and research won't stop. We're still spending more than 12 million dollars.

That includes:

- 5 million dollars to the Department of Health for tobacco cessation programs. That's the same amount we've spent the last two years. And we'll continue to spend the same amount.
- 1 million dollars on diabetes prevention and control. Again this is the third year of this spending because it is such a big problem in New Mexico.
- 470-thousand dollars for HIV and AIDS services.
- 4.4 million dollars once again goes to the University of New Mexico for research into lung and tobacco-related illnesses.
- 1.5 million dollars for breast and cervical cancer work at the Human Services Department. That's a 200-hundred-thousand dollar increase over the current year.

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