

**State of New Mexico**  
*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

For immediate release  
2/17/03

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**GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON PUSHES EDUCATION REFORM**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today in a news conference emphasized the importance of education, and pushed for bold reform. The governor said he is pleased with the progress, so far, on his education-reform agenda. But he said we still have a way to go.

Governor Bill Richardson issued the following statement:

When I proposed my budget, I set out three basic goals: Better schools, better jobs and more money in the pockets of New Mexicans. We took the first step last week when the Legislature passed, and I signed, a historic tax-reduction package.

But we cannot achieve our lofty economic and educational goals without first meeting our most basic needs. Our teachers are the focus of everything that happens in education. That is why I have proposed a 6 percent increase in teacher salaries. In exchange for better pay, I will demand greater accountability and better results from our public schools.

Six percent is a significant increase when you consider most states are foregoing pay raises this year, and in some instances cutting education spending, because of budget deficits. A 6 percent raise this year could move New Mexico teacher salaries from 46<sup>th</sup> to as high as 29<sup>th</sup> in the country.

Why start with teacher pay? Because if we can't attract and keep quality teachers, everything else is wasted money and effort.

Also, we're going to give all other education employees a 2 percent raise. These employees have gone without raises in the past. We're doing what we can to help them.

We are also keeping our promise to include \$11 million in the budget to pay for the fourth year of full-day kindergarten. All those schools that are ready to add full-day kindergarten will get the money to pay for it.

I support and am happy to report that House Bill 3 contains 2-million dollars for the Sustaining Quality in the Schools, Baldrige Process, and other teacher development programs.

I promised New Mexico's Native American leaders that I would support the Indian Education Act. And we're doing that by including \$2.5 million in funding for the program.

We will move cash from school administration into classrooms. School administrators need to do more. I will not tolerate hundreds of thousands of dollars in roofing contracts, failed superintendent contracts and superintendent scare tactics threatening school employees. It's time to move money from administration to the classroom.

House Bill 3 has allocated \$9 million, existing, non-emergency, non-allocated cash balances in the school districts to the general fund. I am proposing a shift of \$20 million. School districts now have over \$150 million of these funds, and that money needs to be dedicated to school instruction.

Finally, we are moving forward with our plan to make public schools more accountable. My recommendation for a Secretary of Education is making steady progress in the Legislature. I am confident legislators – and ultimately New Mexico voters – will embrace a Secretary of Education who will answer directly to the Governor. I want to emphasize that I do not want a state Board of Education, and if there is a board, it should be appointed by me and approved by the Senate.

There will be a bold education reform bill passed this session. I am negotiating with the Legislature, and I look forward to another overwhelming victory for public schools like I got with the tax-reduction package.

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