

State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

For immediate release
3/07/03

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GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON SIGNS HISTORIC COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BILL

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today signed collective bargaining legislation into law that restores public employees' rights to negotiate agreements with management.

Public employees lost those rights in 1999 when the previous administration vetoed legislation that would have extended collective bargaining rights. State and local governments will now be required to bargain with public employees.

Governor Bill Richardson released the following statement before signing the legislation:

Today is a great victory for our public workers across New Mexico. Many of you were denied your rights under the previous administration. I have long believed that all workers have earned the right to negotiate. During my entire 15 years in Congress, I was always a proud supporter of collective bargaining. Under my administration, and from now on in New Mexico, you have a seat at the table.

As we saw during 9-11, public employees courageously put their lives on the line for all of us. Yet, even in New Mexico we took our public employees for granted. Those days are gone.

Every day there are hundreds of State Police officers, corrections officers and others who provide public safety and security for all of us. We have thousands of educators who have tremendous responsibilities to teach our children. And there are thousands of public employees who keep our state and local governments running and working for the people of New Mexico every day.

All of those valued employees deserve a fair shake when it comes to negotiating salaries, workplace safety and other aspects of the jobs they perform.

Today is your day.

Today is also a great day for all New Mexicans because collective bargaining will result in a more efficient and more productive state government. I am happy to do my part to restore bargaining rights to public employees. But at the same time, I want to raise the bar for what we expect from public employees.

My goal as Governor is to improve public service for all New Mexicans, and give you back the respect you have earned. To do that, I need the cooperation of state employees at every level. In return for reinstating collective bargaining, I expect our state employees to offer their best efforts in improving service to our state.

Passage of this legislation will again produce a harmonious working environment that promotes mutual respect and cooperation.

Working together, we can improve state government and better serve the public.

I commend the Legislature and the thousands of men and women who worked so hard to make this moment possible. Now I'm honored, together with my friends gathered here today to sign this historic legislation into law.