



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson

Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson praises passage of Sexual Predator bill

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today declared victory for all New Mexicans as a result of the passage of the sexual predator legislation. The House of Representatives voted today to accept a Senate amendment, which means both chambers passed the bill.

Governor Bill Richardson delivered the following remarks today during a news conference:

New Mexico will no longer be known as a haven for sexual predators. Today I'm pleased to announce the unanimous, bipartisan passage of perhaps the most significant law so far in my administration- a strong and tough sexual predator law. I'm calling it "Marissa's Law", in memory of Marissa Mathy-Zvaifler, a beautiful girl whose life was horribly ended by a sexual predator. It's called "Marissa's law", but it stands for all of the many victims of the terrible sex crimes that have plagued our state.

I commend the Legislature for acting in a bi-partisan manner and unanimously passing this landmark legislation.

I should be signing this bill today, and I would if certain senators had not walked out. I am calling on the Senate to get back to work, to join the House and come back to Santa Fe to do the work of the people.

With today's headline heralding the latest tragedy of a man charged with raping an 8-year-old girl, every Republican senator and a handful of Democrats chose to leave rather than stay and finish their work on this crucial public-safety legislation.

This bill, alone, means this special session was a tremendous success. By acting now, we took the politics out of finding solutions to our weak sexual predator laws. With the public watching us in an open special session, we broke the gridlock on this long-divisive issue, and got the job done for the people of New Mexico.

We crafted a strong piece of legislation that goes right to the heart of the problem.

By setting mandatory minimum sentences for sexual predators, we can keep them off the streets and prevent judges from releasing dangerous criminals into our neighborhoods. Ultimately, this law will prevent more tragic deaths like Marissa's, or victims such as Katie Sepich of Carlsbad, or Brianna Lopez of Las Cruces, or any of the others.



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By creating a Sex Offender Management Board – a board with real teeth – we can adequately screen sex offenders and develop guidelines for tracking sex offenders. This board will also review Megan’s Law, and recommend changes to strengthen it during the next legislative session in January.

And by increasing penalties, creating a new class of crimes for a sex offense against a child, and extending parole and probation for sex offenders, we are sending a clear message to sex offenders outside New Mexico - You are not welcome here.

I’d like to thank the sponsors of the bill, Representatives Al Park and Tom Swisstack, and Senator Michael Sanchez for managing the bill in the Senate. And the Speaker of the house for this leadership on this and other important issues.

Now I’d like to recognize Marisa’s mother, Erica Zweifler, and thank her for her courage, and her support of this legislation.

After that, I want Representatives Park and Swisstack to say a few words.

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