



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**

*Governor*

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## **Governor Bill Richardson signs gaming compact With Navajo Nation**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today signed a gaming compact with the Navajo Nation that authorizes gaming at the Tohajiilee Chapter.

Governor Bill Richardson delivered the following remarks during a signing ceremony today:

It's an honor today to lend a hand to the Navajos of the Tohajiilee Chapter in a goal they've sought for many years – the ability as a sovereign nation to engage in Indian gaming. I want to emphasize that I will be honoring state law, which states that any sovereign tribe in New Mexico can sign the 2001 compact.

Like the 11 New Mexico tribes and pueblos that have already signed the 2001 gaming compacts, the Tohajiilee Navajos are pursuing gaming to further economic development on the reservation.

The Navajo Nation has debated gaming for many years now. It's an important issue – one that is not to be taken lightly. They've made their decision. I am supporting the Navajos by signing this compact today.

This compact is identical to the 2001 compact, which was approved by the Legislature, the federal government and the previous administration. It has passed the litmus test before, and has adequate safeguards for all participants. That's why I am comfortable supporting the Navajo Nation's decision to allow gaming under federal law, and limited to the Tohajiilee Chapter.

The Navajo Nation will regulate its gaming operation under its gaming ordinance, which has been approved by the National Indian Gaming Commission. With my signature, the compact now goes to the Secretary of Interior for approval.

I am confident that Secretary Gale Norton will approve this compact, which is identical to the compact negotiated in 2001 by the state of New Mexico and 11 New Mexico tribes and pueblos.

Today, I sign this compact in the spirit of government-to-government relations, with my good friends – the Navajos – the Dine.