

Governor Bill Richardson Calls Special Session a Success Says New Mexico is Safer, Stronger, and Moving Forward

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today held a news conference at the State Capitol to share his thoughts on the just concluded special session of the New Mexico Legislature.

The Governor's prepared remarks from the news conference:

"Every New Mexican can, and should feel very good about what was accomplished during the special session of the legislature.

First, I want to thank, and commend most of the Legislators for their hard work and commitment during the session. They accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time, and in doing so, took action that will help move New Mexico forward, and help me build the high-wage, prosperous New Mexico economy of the future.

The unanimous, bi-partisan approval of "Marissa's Law", my package of stronger and tougher penalties for sex-offenders, means we took a bold step toward creating a safer community for all of our citizens, particularly our most valuable, and most vulnerable- our children. With the stroke of a pen we have slammed the door and told sexual predators- you are not welcome in New Mexico, and you will no longer find a legal haven here.

I am proud that a majority of legislators saw the urgent need to pass my economic growth and transportation package- make no mistake, this is significant legislation that will have a positive impact of eight-point-four billion dollars over the next six to eight years.

We had to do this now. Interest rates are low, but are expected to rise, and every 1 percent increase would mean New Mexico would lose \$131 million in bonding capacity.

If we had waited until the regular session, by the time all was said and done we would have lost critical months of the construction season, and the opportunity to put thousands of New Mexicans to work right away. The time to get our economy moving is NOW, not the end of next year or even later.

My growth package is fiscally responsible, and will generate jobs and benefits for every county in New Mexico.

- This package will create some 8-thousand jobs *per year* for the next 8 years- over 50-thousand new jobs for New Mexico.
- It will also benefit hundreds of New Mexico businesses because the projects will be packaged so New Mexico contractors and consultants can do the job.

- It will make our roads safer, make commuting easier, and help facilitate our economic growth plans by building a solid infrastructure across the state.
- We've asked New Mexicans to pay an extra \$10 next year, and \$2.50 in 2005 for vehicle registrations. This is a good investment, because better roads will save the average driver approximately \$220 per year from not repairing or replacing tires. I'd spend \$12.50 to save \$220 anytime.
- There is no increase in the gas tax in this bill.
- However, the vast majority of revenues in the bill come from those who use the roads the most- overweight trucks. And 75 to 80-percent of the trucks using our highways are not based here.
- It will actually *generate* work for New Mexico trucking companies.

This could not be done, as some Republicans claimed, by simply refinancing existing bonds. That plan would have yielded less money, cost us millions more, and dropped our important bond rating. It was clearly unacceptable.

Our plan will provide the needed \$1.6 billion, cost us less in interest, and protect our bond rating.

Many Republicans claimed the session was a waste of money. Tell that to the loved ones of the victims of sexual predators. Tell that to the thousands of New Mexicans who will now have jobs because of this transportation package, and the communities who will have better roads. I am disappointed those Republicans made this a partisan issue and refused to have an open mind.

Nevertheless, we did accomplish a lot, and I learned a lot during this session. I will work harder to get legislators involved in the process. No doubt, I can come on pretty strong- but as I said in my state of the state speech, I will make mistakes. But we have a lot to do in New Mexico, and I will always err on the side of action- on the side of making a difference for New Mexicans.

In the meantime, I am proud of what we accomplished, and because of what was done, New Mexicans are safer, our economy is stronger, and we will continue the dramatic progress we have made since January.”