



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson

Governor

For immediate release
10/17/03

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Governor Bill Richardson outlines agenda To strengthen sex offender laws

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today outlined the details of his plan to strengthen sex offender laws.

Governor Richardson will introduce sex-offender legislation during the upcoming special session on Oct. 27.

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

I've said over and over that New Mexico desperately needs tougher laws to help us get a grip on the growing problem of sex offenders.

But nothing brings that point home like this new statewide report – issued Thursday – that spells out just how bad the problem is, and worse, how many young children are victimized by sexual predators – usually someone they know.

These statistics are staggering.

- 71 percent of rape victims in 2002 were younger than 19
- 20 percent of rape victims were 6 or younger.
- 2,815 sex crimes were reported to law enforcement.
- Even more disturbing is the fact that 85 percent of rape victims don't report the crime.

This is a statewide problem that is getting worse – not better. And we need to do something now to protect our families, our children and our communities.

That's why I will be asking the Legislature, when it meets in special session this month, to tackle this problem now. We must be decisive. We must take a more aggressive, proactive approach to protecting New Mexicans from sex offenders.

Here's what I'm proposing:

- Mandatory minimum sentence for criminal sexual penetration in the second-degree. This is hard jail time. I will not tolerate sexual offenders on the streets threatening New Mexicans.
- Create a Sex Offender Management Board.
- Pass a new law extending parole for sex offenders.
- Pass a new law forcing sex offenders to stay on probation longer.
- Create a new class of crimes for a sex offense against a child.
- Increase penalties for kidnapping of a child involving a sexual offense.

I'll let my policy advisers, lay out the details of these proposals.

But I want to talk, first, about the idea of a Sex Offender Management Board.



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You may remember last month that the friends of Marissa Mathy-Zvaifler, the teen-ager who was killed by a sex offender at the Sunshine Theater, recommended that the state create a committee to deal with sex crimes and convicted offenders. Many others have recommended a similar concept. That's what we're doing. This board will have real teeth. Among other things, the board will develop a standard procedure for evaluation and ID of convicted sex offenders. It will develop standards for treatment programs; create a screen program to assist in the screening of sex offenders; and develop guidelines for tracking sex offenders. This board will also review the Sex Offender Notification and Registration Act and recommend changes if necessary.

These are results-oriented recommendations that will stem this growing tide of sexual crimes. This issue is not partisan. The public demands and deserves solutions to this horrendous problem. And they want them now. The Legislature should join with me in a bipartisan fashion to pass this historic legislation.