

Governor's Office Responds to False and Misleading Associated Press Story

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SANTA FE- Billy Sparks, Director of Communications for Governor Bill Richardson, today issued a statement in response to a story, written by Associated Press reporter Barry Massey, about the contingency fund established by the New Mexico Legislature for use by New Mexico Governors.

“This is a false and misleading report that buried the fact that the Governor always reimburses personal, incidental expenses. Taxpayers are not paying for the Governor's coffee. Simply put, it's classic, yellow journalism written and edited to embarrass the Governor. It misleads the public into thinking that taxpayers are picking up the tab for items the Governor pays for. That's just not true.

The entire implication of the article, the headline, the picture and the lead is misleading and inaccurate.

The report on contingency fund expenses will be filed in January as required by law. The Governor did not use the contingency fund to reimburse incidental expenses. He used his own money. Mr. Massey was informed of that fact.

The Governor's office is also deeply concerned about the intentional breach of security by revealing the name and showing the picture of one of the Governor's security detail.

Mr. Massey was informed of the reimbursements and of the need to protect the identity of the Governor's security detail. He chose to ignore that and I can only hope that nothing results from this indiscretion. The safety of the Governor's security personnel and their families are as much a concern to us as the Governor's.

The vast majority of the travel expenses are for the Governor's security, a legitimate public expense for this and every previous Governor,

Also, the direct benefits to New Mexico coming as a result of the Governor's national and international personal relationships with world leaders is totally ignored. For example, New Mexico electronic exports to South Korea have increased 140 million dollars over the same period last year, a 330% increase. January to April New Mexico exports to Mexico increased 118% over last year, going from 20 to 43 million dollars. This means thousands of jobs for New Mexicans.

Would Mr. Massey prefer that the governor not use his international contacts to promote New Mexico and build stronger trade relationships with other nations?

New Mexico is now in the top three states for job growth. The Governor announced 300 new jobs for Albuquerque yesterday, 500 new jobs in Roswell today and has announced over 13,000 new jobs since January.

This is real progress and real results made by a Governor who works harder and has done more for our state in a shorter period of time than anyone ever has.”