



## **Governor Bill Richardson Announces Disability Initiative**

### **Makes hiring disabled New Mexicans a priority**

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today announced an initiative effective immediately directing state agencies to increase the number of disabled New Mexicans working for state government.

“Government must accurately reflect and represent our community,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “Diversity must not be limited to ethnicity and gender, it must include the many qualified and productive citizens with disabilities.”

According to the 2000 Census, more than 20 percent of New Mexicans have some kind of mental or physical disability- slightly above the national average (19%). Yet the percentage of disabled persons employed by the state is far below that percentage.

State disability administrators and agency directors, along with people living with disabilities have been working with Governor Richardson’s office to create a statewide hiring system to expand opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities.

“Through this program, the State will serve as a model employer for individuals with disabilities. In fact, I challenge all municipalities, and businesses that don’t already have this kind of policy, to make hiring disabled New Mexicans a priority.”