



Governor Bill Richardson Announces Comprehensive Statewide Initiatives to reduce Gang Violence and Gang Participation

Plan calls for tougher laws, intervention and education

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BERNALILLO- Governor Bill Richardson today formally introduced a comprehensive package of initiatives that will reduce gang violence and gang participation across New Mexico.

“We’re taking these bold steps to slam the door on gangs that have targeted New Mexico- particularly *rural New Mexico*- as ripe for the picking for gang activity- drugs, burglary, and violence. Gangs are not welcome here, and we will put them out of business,” said Governor Richardson. “We are mobilizing all available state and community resources for this effort, which is non-partisan, non-political, and focused on the local level.”

The Governor noted that New Mexico ranks 5th in the nation for violent crime, and gangs are a prime reason. Experts say at the current rate of gang activity, New Mexico is less than 5 years behind Los Angeles County, which has an estimated 13-hundred gangs and nearly 100,000 gang members. “Let me be clear- **We’re not going to let that happen,**” said Governor Richardson.

Target Adult and Juvenile Gang Members

- The Governor will create a “crisis response team”, mobilizing law enforcement agencies to weed-out gang violence problems from communities in crisis. This was used effectively in Bernalillo earlier this year.
- The Governor will propose legislation making it a crime for adults- and juveniles sentenced as adults- to recruit new gang members, and extend prison sentences for crimes committed on behalf of gangs.

- The Governor will encourage communities to use state and local nuisance abatement laws whenever possible to shut down known gang hang-outs.

Adult and Youth Disassociation and Intervention

- The state will implement gang disassociation programs for incarcerated adults and youth (Corrections and Children, Youth, and Families) in addition to intensive community supervision for parolees, including the increased use of ankle bracelets and other available monitoring technology.
- The state will promote and encourage programs that are already working in local communities- The Taos Restorative Justice “Talking Circle” Program, the Boys and Girls Clubs of New Mexico, Youth development, Inc. of Albuquerque, the Children’s Cabinet After School Initiative, and the “Weed and Seed” program in Albuquerque’s South Valley.
- The Governor has directed all involved state agencies to strengthen efforts to educate young people about the dangers of gangs and in finding employment and other alternatives to gang membership. “I firmly believe the best way to reduce gang activity and violence in the future is to educate and engage our children *today*,” said Governor Richardson.

Mobilize Communities

- The state will partner and coordinate activities among law enforcement, schools, service agencies, and neighborhood groups.
- CYFD is hiring regional coordinators who will act as “Community Catalysts” to support local efforts and tie them to state resources.
- The CYFD “Community Catalysts” will also work to identify youth employment and volunteer opportunities within local communities.
- The Governor has ordered the expansion of the GangNet Database to help communities identify gang members and problems and strengthen intervention efforts.

Gangs are mobile, and because of intensive gang reduction efforts in California, they’re trying to gain footholds in states like New Mexico, specifically targeting rural areas. And the effects of gang relocation are being felt across the state:

- More than 100 drive-by shootings in Roswell so far this year,
- 5 gang related killings in Clovis so far this year, compared to 2 or 3 murders in an average year,
- Children as young as 11 being recruited into gangs in Espanola,
- Increasing gang-related violence in communities across New Mexico, increases in burglary and drug trafficking, increases in violent crime in general.

“Gang violence and enterprise is a crisis in New Mexico that threatens our safety, our families, and the future of our children. **That is why we must take decisive action NOW,**” said the Governor.

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