



**State of New Mexico**  
*Office of the Governor*

**Governor Bill Richardson, State Senator Leonard Tsosie, State Representative James Roger Madalena Celebrate Approval of New Cabinet-Level Indian Affairs Department**

For Immediate Release

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today joined State Senator Leonard Tsosie, State Representative James Roger Madalena, and Native American leaders in celebrating legislative approval for the cabinet-level New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs. The action also authorizes the cabinet position of Secretary of Indian Affairs. The legislation was sponsored by Representative Madalena (D-Jémez Pueblo), and Senator Tsosie (D-Crownpoint).

“New Mexico’s Native Americans now officially have an equal voice and permanent place in my Cabinet,” said Governor Richardson. “As I promised during the campaign, we have removed another barrier to a full and respectful government-to-government relationship between the State of New Mexico and the 19 Pueblos, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and the Navajo Nation.”

The New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs is the first cabinet level Native American state agency in the country. The legislation also creates an Indian Affairs Advisory Board, consisting of urban and rural tribal representatives, to advise the department on policy matters.

“In the past, Native Americans in New Mexico have been left behind, kept away from the table. Those days are gone,” said Senator Tsosie. “The 190,000 Native Americans in New Mexico are now fully represented in Santa Fe, and will be recognized as full partners as we work together to improve the lives of all New Mexicans.”

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