



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

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## **Governor Bill Richardson Signs Tougher DWI Legislation and Child Safety Laws**

### **Governor Praises Supreme Court for Considering Change in Six Month Rule**

*Santa Fe-* Governor Bill Richardson today signed legislation that toughens DWI penalties and Child Safety Laws for New Mexico's children.

"I'm proud today to move forward in our effort to get drunk drivers off our streets, and to punish those who get behind the wheel and put all New Mexicans in jeopardy," Governor Richardson said.

"Before I sign some very important DWI and child safety legislation, I want to make a major announcement important to our fight against the bureaucracy that has protected drunk drivers for far too long.

The New Mexico Supreme Court recently decided to consider a change in court rules to allow the courts to hear DWI and domestic violence cases beyond the rigid 6-month time period that has, in effect, prevented many DWI convictions in the past.

I wrote a letter last year to the Supreme Court asking the justices to consider such a change. I found it appalling that many DWI cases were dismissed in Metro, Magistrate and Municipal courts - where the vast majority of DWI and domestic violence cases are

heard - simply because of crowded court dockets. These courts need the flexibility to hear these cases, and ensure drunk drivers and batterers are not let out of jail on a technicality.

I applaud the Supreme Court for recommending a change in the rule, and I hope that they render a final decision in the near future to take care of this problem.

This new effort, along with tough legislation I'm signing into law today, goes a long way toward making our state safer for all New Mexico citizens - especially innocent children who are all too often put in harm's way.

The two anti-DWI bills, Senate Bill 144/207 and House Bill 487 do several things including:

- Longer sentences for repeat DWI offenders who kill or injure. That means those drunk drivers will get an additional four years added to their sentences for each prior DWI conviction.
- DWI offenders who violate the terms of their probation will be denied credit for any time spent on probation. Instead, they will face a full sentence.
- Mandatory alcohol and drug screening, and treatment programs for multiple offenders
- Convictions in tribal jurisdictions will now count as prior offenses in state court.
- This new law officially lowers the legal blood alcohol limit for commercial drivers to .04.
- With this signature on this bill, the crime of providing alcohol to minors will be prosecuted as a fourth-degree felony under liquor control laws. Also, offenders can now be charged for providing alcohol to people between the ages of 18 and 21 as a fourth degree felony.

The Governor also signed Senate Bill 48, which will help New Mexico's children who are growing up in split-parent families.

This bill:

- Allows the Child Support Enforcement Division to negotiate with non-custodial parents to make it easier to get them on a payment plan and start getting support to the children who deserve and need it.
- The state will negotiate lower interest rates, create an amnesty program for delinquent child support cases, and limit the number of years in which to establish paternity.
- The state is handling about 63-thousand child support cases. Last year we increased child support enforcement collections to 72-million dollars, up by nearly 13-percent from the previous year.

“We owe it to these children to do whatever we can to make sure they’re getting the support they need,” said Governor Richardson.

Governor Richardson had a message for DWI advocates and for all New Mexicans: “We now have tougher sentences for people who drive drunk and kill. We’ve created a real deterrent for anyone who even thinks about providing alcohol to kids. But I’m not done. I will be back - again - to keep raising the stakes for DWI until it is no longer a problem in New Mexico.”

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