



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

News advisory
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Governor Bill Richardson signs law giving state employees Better health benefits

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today signed a new collective bargaining agreement and legislation that increases the state's contribution toward group health insurance for state employees. The new benefits are part of a negotiated, collective bargaining agreement between the state and employees. Governor Richardson also signed that agreement today during a news conference.

Governor Richardson delivered the following remarks today:

One of my goals as Governor has been to improve public service for all New Mexicans, and give back the respect that state employees earned - from the State Police to our highway workers who brave the elements to keep our roads safe.

We got the ball rolling last year when I proudly reinstated collective bargaining for public employees at every level.

As a result of that process, and the ensuing good-faith negotiations, I am pleased to sign a new collective bargaining agreement that was overwhelmingly approved by state workers. After five months of tough negotiations, state workers will now have a two-year agreement that ensures 2-percent pay raises next year and a major overhaul of health insurance for employees.

In conjunction with that agreement, I am signing legislation today that increases benefits to the level state employees and their families deserve.

House Bill 451, which becomes law with the stroke of my pen, is a critical part of taking care of New Mexico's state employees. This new law will mean real money in the pockets of our hard-working employees.

By increasing the state's contribution toward group health insurance for state employees, we're doing what we can to ensure that salary increases are not wiped out by the cost of health insurance. State employees will have better insurance premiums for the first time in 19 years.

Under this plan, which was negotiated with employees, the average savings to an employee making 21-thousand dollars who purchases Blue Cross Blue Shield family coverage would be \$1,400 next year.

This is a fiscally responsible plan that recognizes the important contributions of state employees.

I said this when I signed the collective bargaining bill, and I'll say it again today: I need the cooperation of state employees at every level to implement my agenda for moving New Mexico forward. In return for reinstating collective bargaining, raising salaries and providing more state assistance for health-insurance costs, I expect our state employees to offer their best efforts in improving service to our state.

This day belongs to New Mexico state employees. Congratulations.

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