



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

Governor Bill Richardson Officially Opens Governor's Office of Victims' Assistance

Crime Victims now have a strong voice at State Government Level

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ALBUQUERQUE- Governor Bill Richardson today officially opened the Governor's Office of Victims' Assistance, located in Albuquerque. The Governor's Office of Victims' Assistance will review complaints, and when appropriate, work with crime victims to cut through the red tape of state government and the legal system.

"I promised during the campaign that I would stand up for the victims of crime- work hard to hold government and bureaucracy accountable, to afford victims the rights they have under the law," said Governor Richardson. "The victims of violent crimes now have a voice at the state level, and no longer will their rights be trampled on, or ignored by the criminal justice system."

The Governor's Office of Victims' Assistance (OVA) will review complaints, investigate a complaint or situation in which a victim is in need of assistance, advocate for the victim when the victim's rights have been violated, and if necessary, intervene in cases to assure that the system honors victim's rights. In addition, the OVA will engage in public education and legislative initiatives when necessary.

Governor Richardson allocated \$200,000 in federal emergency state relief funds in 2003 for startup of the office, and this year included funding for OVA in the state's general budget.

The OVA is located at 3401 Pan American Freeway NE in Albuquerque, and can be reached by phone, **toll free at 1-866-888-1645**.

Governor Richardson also had these remarks:

“I also promised that we would work to make sure that criminals paid their debts to society. Since I took office last year, we’ve taken significant action to increase penalties for criminals and provide critical assistance for victims of violent crimes:

- Last August, I announced the creation of this office and I allocated 200-thousand dollars in federal emergency relief funding for staff and operating expenses, and have now included funding for this crucial office in our state budget,
- During October’s special legislative session we passed laws toughening the penalties for sexual predators and offering new avenues for treatment and monitoring,
- Also during the special session we created the Sex Offender Management Board, chaired by Judge Michael Vigil, setting an aggressive timetable and agenda to deal with sexual predators.

During this year’s regular session we continued to raise the stakes:

- \$1.7 million to for **domestic violence shelters** and programs,
- \$100,000 to **train state police officers and community members to recognize signs of domestic violence** and crimes against children,
- We passed one of the toughest DWI and alcohol related crimes packages in the nation, significantly toughening penalties for DWI offenders, and for adults who provide alcohol to minors,
- We created the position of “DWI Czar” to coordinate and communicate among all of the statewide efforts to battle DWI,
- Just last week I formed the Task Force on Ignition Interlock Technology and Deployment to see if it is feasible to expand the use of interlocks to keep drunk drivers off our roads.

And count on this- I’ll be back next session looking for still tougher penalties for criminals, new and expanded treatment options, and more resources for victims.”

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