



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor

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New Mexico First in Nation

State Issues Reimbursement for \$400,000 Worth of Life Insurance Coverage for Every Member of the New Mexico National Guard

Santa Fe: New Mexico is the first state in the nation to pass the insurance reimbursement program insuring every member of the New Mexico National Guard \$250,000 worth of life insurance coverage. The coverage rose to \$400,000 in September, matching the federal coverage. Seven states have passed similar laws, 36 states proposed similar legislation this year and are expected to attempt passage again next year.

“It’s time to honor our soldiers in deeds as well as words,” Governor Richardson said.

Governor Richardson presented the following remarks Friday morning at a ceremony in Santa Fe.

Good morning soldiers and airmen of the New Mexico National Guard, General Montoya, ladies and gentlemen. What a great day to be a New Mexican and what a great day to be a New Mexico National Guardsman. As your Commander in Chief I am proud to be here with you today on this momentous occasion.

Today we are gathered here at the headquarters of our National Guard to honor you not just in words but in actions. Today we are here to witness the implementation of one of the most innovative pieces of legislation to have been signed into law throughout the entire United States last year.

I proposed this law because I was tired of hearing about how everyone talked about supporting our troops but did nothing. Parades, slaps on the back, speeches, politicians in Washington failed to act.

This is real and I did it because I want each of you to know if you fall, we’ll take care of your family. When a family loses a soldier, they should not be forced into poverty. As your Commander in Chief I want to say from my heart that we’ll never forget your family and we’ll never let you down.

Until we acted in New Mexico, the families of fallen soldiers received just \$12,000.00. That was a national disgrace.

You need to know that if you fall your children will be provided for and your sacrifice will never be forgotten.

I proposed this idea in January of this year and by February 36 states had taken it up.

Today, seven states have passed this exact legislation or something similar to truly honor our soldiers.

And now Congress has raised the allocation to \$100,000.00 and the insurance to \$400,000.00. We matched that in New Mexico.

So now we will pay for your premiums for \$400,000.00 of coverage. I will ask the legislature to continue supporting funding for you at this level when we go into session in January.

New Mexico has always been first to defend our nation. We have the highest number of Medal of Honor winners per capita of all the states. We are home to 200,000 veterans.

And this bill passed unanimously--without a single negative vote --in the House or the Senate and I was proud to sign it into law. This is an idea long overdue and each of you deserves it.

But, I'm not done yet. I want to make it easier and I am having my staff research how to change the national law to allow the state to write one check for all of you directly to the insurance company.

I now want to present to General Montoya a check in the amount of One Million Dollars to pay the life insurance premiums to provide 400,000 dollars of coverage for every member of the New Mexico National Guard.

This check represents the gratitude and thanks of our state to each of you for your service.

Now, I have the pleasure of presenting checks to 14 of New Mexico's heroes. These 14 soldiers and airmen seated before you represent the best of the best.

Airmen like Master Sergeant James Gorman who has participated in five overseas deployments in his 19 years of service with the New Mexico National Guard.

Sergeant Gorman volunteered for service in New Jersey after 9-11 and later served in Iraq, always leading by example.

Next, Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Clint Lopez, the recipient of the Air Medal for action in Afghanistan. Sergeant Lopez has also served in the United Nations operations in Kosovo.

These two soldiers have brought credit to our state and to our nation.

These 14 soldiers, who have always put country, sacrifice and duty before personal gain, stand for all members of the New Mexico National Guard.

General Montoya if you will accompany me.