



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Contact: Jon Goldstein
Santa Fe: 505-476-2248

Governor Richardson Announces Actions to Get Junk Food out of Schools, Keep Students Healthy

Governor's Healthy Kids Agenda Part of "Year of the Child" Legislative Proposals

(Santa Fe, NM) -- Governor Bill Richardson today announced his Healthy Kids agenda designed to keep New Mexico students ready to learn, in the classroom and out of the doctor's office. The Governor spoke today at Kearny Elementary School in Santa Fe and participated in a Cooking with Kids class at the school.

"In order for our kids to be ready to learn, they have to be healthy," said Governor Richardson. "This starts with one simple act. We are going to get all junk food vending out of our elementary schools and we are going to put the snacks in our middle and high schools on a diet. We need to protect our kids from foods and beverages that we all know aren't healthy."

Governor Richardson's anti-junk food proposal will include sensible rules regulating vending machines in New Mexico schools. These rules will ban junk food vending from elementary schools, eliminate all carbonated drinks from middle schools, mandate that middle and high school vending machines only carry healthy snacks, and ensure that all snacks in these schools are limited to 200 calories per serving. The rules will be among the toughest in the nation.

Under the Governor's plan the state will also publish an annual "Healthy Kids Report Card." This report will track progress including information on school vending choices and lists of New Mexico's 10 healthiest and unhealthiest schools.

Governor Richardson's Healthy Kids agenda announced today also includes:

- Movement toward a New Mexico in which every kid, five years old or younger, is covered by health insurance. This includes making administrative changes to Medicaid, including changing income qualifications, to insure 7,800 additional New Mexico kids. \$3.5 million will get these children the coverage they need to stay healthy.
- Getting all New Mexico elementary school students access to physical education. The Governor's budget will include \$7.8 million dollars to hire 200 additional physical education teachers with a goal of having a PE program in every New Mexico elementary school within four years. Studies show that

schools with the lowest percentage of students participating in physical activity are the worst performing schools academically as well. Academic success is directly linked to physical fitness.

- Efforts to make sure all New Mexico elementary school students have access to a healthy breakfast. Governor Richardson's budget will include \$4.2 million to reach this goal.
- Further progress toward getting 100% of New Mexico kids immunized against preventable diseases. Governor Richardson's plan will accomplish this by increasing the availability of vaccines at public health clinics and at schools. After ranking near the bottom in the nation in 2002, New Mexico is currently ranked 15th in the nation.

"When I ran for Governor, I promised that I would work tirelessly to move New Mexico forward – by making our schools work and creating better learning opportunities for students," said Governor Richardson. "Every kid deserves a top notch education and a healthy start in life. We have made much progress on this front – but we must do more to help prepare our children to compete in the 21st century."

More details on Governor Richardson's proposals are included in the attached backgrounder.

Background information on Healthy Kids Initiatives:

Junk Food – The Governor is moving forward with the elimination of junk food in public elementary schools. The Governor's recommendation for the new regulations is that no food vending of any kind will be allowed in elementary schools, and the only drinks allowed to be sold will be milk and water. In middle schools, no carbonated drinks will be sold. Only milk, water, and fruit juices with certain restrictions on calories and serving sizes will be available. Foods at middle schools and high schools allowed in vending will be nutritious snacks such as nuts, seeds, cheese and all snacks will be limited to 200 calories per serving. In high schools, there will be more flexibility after the last lunch period sports drinks and diet caffeine-free soft drinks can be sold. For after school activities such as ball games, the Governor wants to have at least 50% of the foods sold be healthy choices.

Physical Education – The Governor's goal is to have universal physical education for every New Mexico elementary school student. The Governor is proposing \$7.8 million in the 2006 legislative session to fund an additional 200 physical education teachers and equipment. Within four years, this will increase to 760 new elementary physical education teachers. During the 2005 legislative session, \$1.4 million was allocated for an elementary physical education pilot. This resulted in funding 25 teachers serving 34 sites.

Elementary School Breakfast – Governor Richardson is proposing \$4.2 million to provide every elementary school in New Mexico with a breakfast program. Over 800 schools in New Mexico operate one or more meal programs. On a daily basis, nutritionally balanced, free or low cost meals/milk are provided to more than 190,000 New Mexico's students.

Insuring children – The Governor is proposing an additional \$3.5 million to help insure nearly 8,000 more children. It the Governor's goal to make it easier for New Mexico families to insure their children through Medicaid by changing what is counted as income. Currently Medicaid serves 411,000 New Mexicans, two-thirds of which are children. Almost 50,000 low-income children eligible, but not enrolled in the Medicaid program. The goal to insure an additional 7,800 New Mexico children by making administrative changes to Medicaid, including changing income qualifications. The Governor will also improve access to prenatal care and assistance for 1,200 new moms a year by expanding eligibility. The Governor will also provide a tax benefit for small employers with less than 10 employees that offer family health insurance coverage.

Immunizations – The Governor's goal is to have 100 percent of New Mexico children protected from vaccine preventable diseases. This will be accomplished by increasing vaccines given at public health clinics and at

New Mexico schools. The State has worked hard with its health partners to bring immunization rates up for children in New Mexico. It has been incredibly successful and the Center for Disease Control gave New Mexico an award for the most improved immunization rates from 2000 to 2004. After ranking near the bottom in the nation in 2002, New Mexico is now ranked 15th for fully immunizing almost 84 percent of its toddlers.

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