



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Contact: Pahl Shipley
Santa Fe: 505-476-2202

Governor Bill Richardson Calls Special Session A Victory For New Mexicans

Governor instructs Taxation and Revenue Dept. to expedite delivery of relief funds for high gasoline and home heating costs

Relief could total more than \$700 for neediest households

SANTA FE-Governor Bill Richardson this afternoon issued the following statement regarding the just completed special session of the New Mexico Legislature:

“One month ago, I called this Special Session to provide immediate relief for high home heating and gas costs. I am pleased to see that we have accomplished my goal. Because of this Session, real help will soon be on the way to 1.7 million New Mexicans, especially our working families, low income citizens, and seniors.

On the rebate bill, I have instructed Jan Goodwin—my Tax and Revenue secretary—to prepare the rebate checks and expedite their delivery to every New Mexican taxpayer. Those checks will be mailed within the next three weeks. The benefits from the rebate bill range from \$64-\$289, an average of \$125.

For example:

- A single first-year teacher with no children earning \$30,000 per year will receive a check for \$109,
- A single mother with 3 children earning \$44,000 per year will receive a check for \$154, and
- A married couple with 2 children earning \$50,000 will receive a check for \$139.

As the recent cold weather demonstrates, winter is on our doorstep. I will be proud to sign the Home Heating Assistance Legislation that will speed relief from high heating costs to 60,000 lower income and elderly New Mexicans. This bill provides a total of \$23 million in home heating relief, meaning the State of New Mexico will pay—on average--\$450 toward the heating bills of our most vulnerable citizens.

The bill commits \$2.5 million to address long term heating costs by repairing and insulating homes to be more cold weather proof.

And we will be helping public safety officials—our state police and our volunteer firefighters. They need fuel cost assistance to ensure the public safety, and the state of New Mexico will help them immediately. The bill includes \$3.5 million for this purpose.

This package also provides \$5 million in assistance for public schools for gasoline and heating costs. We must ensure our children can get to school, and make sure those schools are properly heated.

As for the speeding up of the tax cuts I proposed in 2003, I have stated that it would have been more fiscally prudent to have considered these in the context of the overall budget picture. I know it is politically easy and popular to send money back to the taxpayers—but our schools need support, our teachers need raises and our kids need health care. Unless I can be assured that these tax measures do not threaten other critical programs, I cannot support them.

In the days ahead I will completely review this package and the provisions added by the Legislature. I will not hesitate to line item veto provisions that are reckless, or that we cannot afford.

I would like to thank the legislators, especially Speaker Ben Lujan, Majority Leader Ken Martinez, and the entire House of Representatives, for joining me to provide this relief and return part of the state's surplus revenue to our citizens. This is a victory for the people of New Mexico.

I am, however, very disappointed the Senate didn't act on our price gouging legislation despite overwhelming bipartisan support in the House. New Mexicans are facing the highest gas and home heating costs in history and yet, because of the inaction of the Senate, New Mexicans still have no legal protection against predatory pricing during times of crisis. In the interim period I will work to build additional support for my price gouging package and you can bet I'll be back, and be ready to pass price gouging legislation during the January session.

Finally, I commend the House for moving forward with the impeachment process in a responsible, deliberate manner.”