



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

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## **Governor Richardson Outlines Ethics Reform Package, Calls for Creation of Independent Ethics Commission**

*ALBUQUERQUE, NM* – Governor Richardson today announced a comprehensive ethics reform package during the annual KQOB business luncheon in Albuquerque. This package includes the establishment of an independent ethics commission, limitations on gifts and campaign contributions and public financing for judicial candidates.

“New Mexicans expect a government that’s honest and honorable,” said Governor Richardson. “Holding the highest ethical standards is our responsibility as public servants. It’s also the best, and only way, we can protect the public’s faith in their democracy.”

Governor Richardson urged citizens and members of the business community to help push for ethics reform. In May of 2006, Governor Richardson formed an ethics reform task force to conduct a bi-partisan review of ethics and campaign finance in New Mexico. Led by UNM Law Dean Suellen Scarnecchia and Former Governor Garrey Carruthers, the task forward put forward a series of recommendations. Based on those recommendations and his own priorities, Governor Richardson today proposed an ethics reform package that he will seek to pass during the upcoming legislative session.

1. **Establish an independent ethics commission.** This commission would provide independent oversight of the executive and legislative branches and all state employees. It would receive and investigate complaints by concerned citizens and whistleblowers. The commission would also have strong powers to investigate and discipline, including the ability to fine, censure, and reprimand public officials, state employees, lobbyists, contractors and officials.

2. **Limits on Gifts.** The Governor proposed that no state official, employee or candidate be allowed to receive a gift greater than \$250. During the legislative session there would be a ban on gifts greater than \$100. There would be criminal penalties for those who break the law.
3. **Set campaign contribution limits.** The Governor proposes that statewide races match the federal level of \$2,100 per individual, per election. His package will also recommend \$1,050 limits for PRC and District races, and a ban on cash of more than \$100 from one person.
4. **“Clean Elections” Public Financing.** The Governor’s ethics reform package proposes a phased approach toward public financing beginning with judicial elections, based on the successful Public Regulatory Commission campaign system. Using the PRC model, candidates in contested judicial elections could choose to run as a “Clean Elections” candidate. These candidates would qualify for public financing if they meet a threshold based upon the number of \$5 contributions they receive from individuals. If the opposition opts out of the public system and spends more than public funding provides, “Clean elections” candidates would be given matching funds.
5. **Better campaign reporting.** This package calls for more detailed reporting of campaign finances, more frequent reporting in non-election years, and cumulative totals of campaign contributions by each individual to each candidate.
6. **Amend Governmental Conduct Act.** The amendments will help prevent public officials and employees from abusing public office. These amendments will expand coverage of the Governmental Conduct Act to include all public servants, including judges.

“These proposals will allow New Mexicans to know where campaign money comes from, where it goes, and how it’s spent,” said Governor Richardson. “This is not an issue that affects the few. Every citizen benefits from a government that is open, transparent and accountable. And every citizen is harmed by one that is not.”

The Governor pushed for a strong anti-corruption package in the 2006 Legislature. “Last year we had some success,” said Governor Richardson. “We were able to pass a ban on campaign contributions from contractors seeking to do business with the state. But, the remainder of the package, died in the Legislature. This time, there are no excuses. This time, reform must be done.”