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## **Governor Bill Richardson Urges Bush Administration to End Heartless Medical Marijuana Policy**

*Governor Also Directs Health Department to Resume Planning for Medical Marijuana Program*

SANTA FE -- Governor Bill Richardson today sent a letter to President Bush urging him to end the misguided priority the Office of National Drug Control Policy has placed on threatening the prosecution of state workers for providing and patients for receiving medical marijuana relief.

“At a time when the scourge of meth is coming across the border, and cocaine and heroin use continues to ravage our communities, the federal government should be cracking down on real criminals---not people who are trying to help those in pain,” Governor Richardson said in the letter to the President.

The Bush Administration earlier this year threatened to target New Mexico state officials with federal prosecution if the Legislature passed a bill making medical marijuana legal for the most seriously ill patients. Governor Richardson today vowed to fight the federal intimidation efforts, and use every state resource to fully implement the state law.

“Mr. President, you still have an opportunity to leave a legacy of compassion by adding an exemption in federal law for states that enact medical marijuana and be an ally instead of an adversary in assisting critically ill people,” Governor Richardson said in his letter. “Respected physicians and government officials should not fear going to jail for acting compassionately and caring for our most vulnerable citizens. Nor should those most vulnerable of citizens fear their government because they take the medicine they need.”

Governor Richardson also directed the state Department of Health to continue planning to fully implement the law, including designing a program to provide eligible patients with access to medical marijuana. The Governor said he wants the Health Department to be prepared to start a program once legal hurdles, imposed by the federal government, are cleared.

