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Office of Governor Richardson Issues Statement on AG Opinion on State Universities Sharing Salaries for Cabinet Secretaries

Several months ago Governor Richardson directed his staff to examine the arrangements the state had with the cabinet secretaries in question and to address the concerns that had been raised. This review confirmed that there was no evidence of any unethical behavior or conflicts of interest.

Nevertheless, out of an exercise of caution and in order to remove any doubts regarding potential conflicts, several weeks ago Governor Richardson directed his staff to terminate the agreements with UNM and NMSU regarding funding of salaries for these cabinet secretaries.

Both the issue of who paid their salary and dual employment made up the bulk of the Attorney General's analysis. But, the opinion relied on some inaccurate, outdated assumptions. None of the secretaries worked for the universities, while serving as a state official.

Now the salaries of the Secretary of Health, and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Higher Education are paid solely from state government funds as exempt employees, provide no services to their former employers, and have formally severed all ties to their universities.

The bottom line—the people of New Mexico will continue to be served by highly qualified Cabinet Secretaries with extensive experience in their field.

Please attribute to Allan Oliver, Deputy Communications Director.

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