



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

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### **Governor Richardson Calls for Restoration of Indian Health Care Funding, Reauthorization of Indian Health Care Act**

**Santa Fe, NM --** Governor Richardson today urged the New Mexico congressional delegation to support funding for Indian health care and to help reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act in the new Congress.

First enacted in 1976 and reauthorized four times since then, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act has languished in Congress since 2000 without reauthorization. President Bush's 2008 fiscal year budget request for Indian Health Services (IHS) also cuts \$33 million for urban Indian health, and \$29 million for facilities construction, service and maintenance.

"In several meetings held over the last year and a half with New Mexico's 22 federally recognized Indian Pueblos, Tribes and Nations, one issue came across loud and clear: we must improve Native American health care," Governor Richardson said in his letter (attached). "The proposed cuts in the president's FY 2008 IHS budget will have a devastating effect on the health of New Mexico's tribal citizens."

The Governor pointed out that since 2006, the Santa Fe Indian Hospital no longer provides services to expectant Native American mothers, which has a ripple effect on other providers and hospitals. And while state health and human service agencies are working to improve outreach and complement federal programs, "these state efforts cannot and should not relieve the federal government of their trust obligation to provide health services."

The Governor noted in his letter that the New Mexico Department of Health published *Health Disparities in NM: Identifying and Prioritizing Disparities*. “Our extensive state study revealed that Native Americans experience the worst rates of health disparities and have the highest rates of death for diabetes, pneumonia/influenza, alcoholism and cirrhosis,” stated the Governor. He also pointed out that Native Americans are disproportionately uninsured compared to the rest of the state in part “because they believe they have direct access to health services when in fact, these services had either eroded or are grossly under funded.”

Since taking office in 2003, Governor Richardson has urged Congress on numerous communications to adequately fund Indian Health, called for state and tribal consultations on a government-to-government basis to improve health care and elevated the New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs to a cabinet level position.

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