



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

For immediate release  
Feb. 23, 2007

Contact: Jon Goldstein  
(Santa Fe) 505-476-2248

### **Governor Richardson Acts to Protect, Promote Historic Fort Stanton**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today announced he will establish a State Monument to protect and interpret the Fort Stanton parade grounds quadrangle, stables and related historic buildings at the storied site in southeastern New Mexico. To jump-start restoration efforts at the new monument, the governor also allocated \$1 million to a project to restore and upgrade the headquarters building for use as office and museum space.

“Designating this portion of Fort Stanton as a State Monument will help honor our western heritage and promote tourism in southeastern New Mexico,” Governor Richardson said. “I want this State Monument designation and headquarters building restoration to be the start of making Fort Stanton a major piece in the living history of the town of Lincoln and the state. This is the beginning of a bright future for Fort Stanton.”

Established in 1855, Fort Stanton played a prominent role in opening of Southeastern New Mexico to settlement in territorial days, had a role in the Civil War, and played a significant part in the notorious Lincoln County war and the life and times of Billy the Kid in the 1880s. Students of its history have long advocated for state or federal protection and interpretation of its buildings and grounds. It is reputed to be one of the best preserved forts of its era in the Southwest.

The \$1 million the governor allocated for the administration building project will be combined with a \$210,000 grant from the federal Save America’s Treasures to the Fort Stanton Historical Society, and \$550,000 from previously appropriated state funding to the General Services Department, for a total \$1.76 million restoration project.

Governor Richardson rejected a proposal that carried over from the previous administration that would have involved federal funding to establish a veterans graveyard at the fort's existing graveyard – but with state operating funding thereafter.

“Providing and maintaining proper burial grounds for the nation’s veterans has always been the solemn obligation of the federal government,” Governor Richardson said. “Washington shouldn’t try to pass that responsibility off to the states.”

The state monument designation will transfer control of and responsibility for the historic core of the fort to the state Department of Cultural Affairs, where its continued development and preservation will be under the direction of the Museum of New Mexico Board of Regents.

The Cultural Properties Review Commission Friday unanimously approved a recommendation that the state monument designation be applied. Final approval by the Museum of New Mexico Board of Regents is expected next month.

“Department of Cultural Affairs control will ensure that all activity on the old fort will be done with the highest regard for historic accuracy and preservation,” DCA Secretary Stuart Ashman said. “We will keep the focus on preserving and enhancing the historical appeal of the fort.”

The Fort Stanton Development Commission, established by the Legislature in 2003, has been studying proposals for public-private development projects to bring people and activity back to the sprawling grounds of the fort. This work concerning planning public-private uses for the portion of the fort's real estate outside the historic core will continue – as will exploration for public-private uses within the historic core that are deemed appropriate by the Museum of New Mexico Board of Regents.