



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

For Immediate Release  
July 25, 2007

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## **Governor Richardson Announces \$400,000 Contract to Monitor DWI Court Proceedings**

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today announced a \$400,000 contract for court monitoring has been awarded to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) New Mexico. DWI court proceedings will be monitored in six counties: Bernalillo, Dona Ana, McKinley, Rio Arriba, San Juan and Santa Fe Counties. The project is a part of the State's Impaired Driving Demonstration Project aimed at decreasing drunk driving.

The court monitoring project will provide feedback to the state on the status and effectiveness of current laws and court processes. The program will increase dialogue between the criminal justice system and the state, in an effort to reduce alcohol-related crashes.

New Mexico Department of Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught said, "NMDOT is proud to be involved in this monitoring effort. The courts are a venue often overlooked by the public in the battle against drunk driving. We are pleased to be taking a detailed look at what is happening in court rooms in the counties on the front line in New Mexico's efforts against DWI."

According to New Mexico DWI Czar Rachel O'Connor, "A large percentage of the calls that come in are from people concerned about the adjudication of DWI cases – such as swiftness of case handling, whether sentencing guidelines were followed and justified dismissals. This project will enable us to observe and record data and work cooperatively with the courts towards positive change."

MADD has long been interested in swift and fair prosecution of DWI offenders with appropriate sanctions that will reduce the chances of violators re-offending. U.S. Department of Transportation research shows that repeat DWI offenders are 40 percent

more likely to be involved in a fatal crash. New research shows that first-time offenders have driven drunk more than 75 times.

MADD New Mexico's Executive Director Terry Huertaz said, "We look forward to working cooperatively with the criminal justice system. This is a great opportunity to help New Mexico identify system issues and work to develop effective solutions in the interest of public safety."

In 2003, MADD New Mexico was selected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) as one of only two states to conduct a pilot court monitoring program.

The contract is expected to be approximately \$400,000 and can be renewed annually based on availability of federal and state funds.

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