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**\$200 Million in Emergency Energy Assistance Means More Help
for New Mexicans**

(Emergency Aid will help citizens stay warm this winter)

Santa Fe, January 24, 2003 – Today, Health & Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson released an additional \$200 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) emergency funds for states, territories and tribes due to increases in home heating fuel prices this winter.

“The release of these funds means more than 4,000 additional households in New Mexico will get assistance from the LIHEAP program to help pay their heating bills,” said Secretary-designate Pamela Hyde. Of the \$200 million released by HHS, New Mexico will receive \$630,990, adding to the \$6.6 million the state has already received this year.

So far this winter season, 31,017 families have received help with their home-heating bill through LIHEAP, according to department data. Although January has been unseasonable warm in New Mexico, 5,781 families have been approved so far this month. The average family receives a one-time \$124 LIHEAP benefit, which is normally paid to the utility company.

Last year the LIHEAP program helped 40,601 households in New Mexico but had to close its doors in April because funds ran out. “Our hopes are the release of additional funds will keep our doors open as long as New Mexicans need our assistance this year,” said Hyde.

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Emergency Energy Assistance Money...Add 1

Families earning less than 150 percent of federal poverty can qualify for LIHEAP. This means that a family of three earning less than \$1,878 per month could qualify. LIHEAP applications are taken at any of the 34 Human Services Department Income Support Division offices located throughout the state, or by calling 1 800 283-4465.

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