



State of New Mexico *Office of the Lieutenant Governor*

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For Immediate Release

Governor Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Council Submits New Recommendations to help More New Mexicans Get Access to Health Care

Santa Fe, December 16, 2005 – Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Council, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Diane D. Denish, has submitted its 2005 report to Governor Bill Richardson that includes 25 recommendations aimed at decreasing the number of uninsured in the state. "The Council's report builds on the initiatives passed during the 2005 legislative session, with an emphasis on the Governor's 2006 'Year of the Child' initiatives," Lt. Governor Denish said.

The recommendations are in three categories: Expand Medicaid for low-income individuals; provide tax credits for small employers; provide incentives for, or eliminate barriers to, insuring New Mexicans; and keep the cost of health insurance down. Governor Richardson has already announced his support for several of the recommendations, which include:

- Covering new children and adolescents by making it easier for them to qualify for Medicaid,
- Expanding Medicaid prenatal care to 235% of the Federal Poverty Level,
- Changing recertification of Medicaid eligibility to 12 months, and
- Offering a tax credit for employers who offer health insurance for families.

Governor Richardson will carefully review the task force recommendations in the coming weeks.

New Mexico's uninsured rate saw a small improvement for the first time after several years of growth. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey results for 2004, New Mexico's percent of uninsured was 21.0 percent compared to 22.1 percent in 2003. "Despite the small improvement, The *Insure New Mexico! Council* recognized the need for additional

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recommendations that continue to put New Mexico on the path of insuring more New Mexicans through a number of approaches,” said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department Secretary and *Insure New Mexico! Council* member.

Earlier this year, Governor Richardson signed into law six *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives:

- Funding for the State Coverage Insurance program,
- Creation of the Small Employer Insurance Program,
- Lowering the premium rate structure for the Health Insurance Alliance,
- Expanding health coverage for unmarried dependents by allowing them to stay on their parents’ individual health plans until they turn 25 years old,
- Requiring insurers to offer health insurance plans for part-time employees when their employers choose to offer such insurance, and
- Medicaid outreach to Native American and Hispanic children.

The *Insure New Mexico!* Council members include representatives from all the major health insurance companies doing business in New Mexico, small-business employers and employees, non-profit organizations, advocates and legislators.

The complete *Insure New Mexico!* report and recommendations to Governor Richardson can be found on the *Insure New Mexico!* website at www.insurenewmexico.state.nm.us.

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