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For Immediate Release

## **Expanded Health Coverage and Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee Gets House Approval –**

## **Committee Still Needs Budget Funding**

**Santa Fe, February 9, 2006** – Governor Bill Richardson’s goal of decreasing the number of uninsured in New Mexico gets some help with today’s unanimous House approval of **House Bill 24, Expand Health Insurance Alliance Coverage**, and yesterday’s “do-pass” House vote, (53-7) of **House Bill 481, Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee**.

**HB 24** and duplicate **Senate Bill 381, Expand Health Insurance Alliance Coverage**, give employers more options for covering their employees through the Health Insurance Alliance (HIA). The legislation assures that employers who offer their employees health coverage through publicly offered programs such as the State Coverage Insurance Program (SCI) may also offer coverage through HIA. **HB 24** now goes to the Senate for approval, while **SB 381** has already passed the Senate and is making its way through House committees.

**HB 481** and duplicate **SB 280, Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee**, are designed to analyze the cost, technical and legal issues of various models to achieving health coverage for all New Mexicans. This legislation requires a \$500,000 appropriation, which currently is not in the budget.

The number of uninsured New Mexicans stands at 399,000 or 21.0%, according to the Census Current Population Survey, 2004. “While New Mexico saw a slight improvement in the uninsured rate in 2004, we still have the 49<sup>th</sup> highest uninsured rate in the nation. We need to find real solutions to closing the uninsured gap in our state,” said Hyde.

The various approaches the Committee will analyze include the costs of different approaches, including the current system and the cost of transitioning to another system; the appropriate roles

for health care consumers and providers; Medicaid and other publicly funded, operated or created health care programs; and businesses, nonprofit organizations, brokers and commercial insurers.

Governor Richardson's other Insure New Mexico! legislation includes:

- **House Bill 118** as amended and **Senate Bill 267** as amended, **Medical or Premium Assistance Program, which** passed the House and Senate, respectively, earlier this week. This legislation authorizes the Human Services Department to provide medical or premium assistance for children who are not Medicaid eligible. This legislation also requires budget funding of \$5.6 million, of which \$1 million is currently in the budget.

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