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For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde Announces More New Mexico Families than Ever Before Benefiting from Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Qualified families who have not applied since October 2005 are encouraged to do so

Santa Fe, March 13, 2006 – Human Services Department (HSD) Secretary Pamela Hyde is happy to announce that participation in this year's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is at an all-time high, with a record number of households approved for the once-a-year utility benefit. "Since October 2005 we have approved 56,884 LIHEAP applications, which is more than were approved during the entire previous year, when we served 55,685 families through the energy assistance program," said Hyde.

Last October, in anticipation of high heating bills, Governor Bill Richardson approved \$23 million in state general funds to benefit New Mexico families through LIHEAP. The federal government approved \$9.9 million. So far, \$23.6 million has been distributed to 54,904 families, for an average benefit of \$431. HSD shares a portion of the funding with tribal governments, who administer their own program.

During the 2005 special legislative session a bill was passed that created a moratorium on utility disconnections from November 15 to March 15 if the client qualified for LIHEAP. "With the moratorium coming to an end this week, we encourage families at risk of having their utilities disconnected and who have not yet applied for LIHEAP to contact our offices and apply," said Katie Falls, HSD Deputy Secretary.

Households qualifying for LIHEAP earn less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Level; for example, a family of three with a monthly income below \$2,011.

LIHEAP applications can be completed at any of the department's 35 Income Support Division offices. Applicants should bring with them the following information when applying for LIHEAP:

- Proof of household income for the past 30 days;
- Identification of the person filing the application;
- A Social Security Number (SSN) for all household members;

- Statement of citizenship or proof of immigration status for all household members; and
- One of the following from the past 12 months:
 - Highest gas or electric bill for 30 days of service;
 - Account history printout from a propane company, or receipts for two propane fills with the fewest days in between;
 - A receipt for the purchase of firewood; or
 - A disconnect notice, if you have received one, or the cost of starting utility service at your home.

For more information on LIHEAP, please call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department's LIHEAP website at <http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/liheap.html>.

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