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For Immediate Release

State Coverage Insurance Campaign Unveiled as a One of Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Solutions

SCI offers New Mexico small employers an affordable solution to health care for their employees.

Albuquerque, April 24, 2006 – Today Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Council, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Diane D. Denish, unveiled the new State Coverage Insurance (SCI) campaign aimed at reaching small employers and their employees across New Mexico. "SCI is a public/private program, geared toward helping small employers give their employees the health insurance benefits they deserve," said Lieutenant Governor Denish. "With a \$75 premium per month per employee, small employers should jump at the chance to participate in the SCI program."

SCI is administered by Lovelace, Molina and Presbyterian health plans, and uninsured New Mexico adults between the ages of 19 and 64 began enrolling last July. There are currently 4,350 enrollees, with an additional 629 people approved for the program. To qualify for the program the small employer must have 50 or fewer employees with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level; for example, a family of four with a household income below \$40,000 per year. The funding for SCI comes from the employer, the employee, and the state and federal government through the Medicaid program.

The SCI campaign focuses on the affordability of the program, specifically the \$75 per month, per employee. Depending on an employee's income, he or she then pays \$0-\$35 per month premium. Through September, SCI radio, print and outdoor advertisements can be heard and seen throughout the state, with a specific emphasis on New Mexico's rural communities. The campaign will compliment outreach efforts to New Mexico businesses, Chambers of Commerce and other organizations that have been occurring since the program began last July.

Recently, a small employer from Socorro signed up 25 employees for the SCI program and is looking forward to the benefits for the company and its employees. "We were pleased to learn about the SCI program," said Rebecca Moeller, Assistant Property manager for ARB-Reddy Corporation, dba Holiday Inn Express in Socorro. "Previous attempts to offer group health insurance to hotel employees were unsuccessful as the staff felt they could not afford to share in the monthly premiums. The SCI program, however, offers a plan that would cost little or nothing to the employee. With the help of the SCI program, we hope to retain our good workers with the added benefit of health insurance."

Other *Insure New Mexico!* Solutions are also helping to decrease the uninsured rate in New Mexico. They include:

- Lower premium rate structure for coverage purchased through the Health Insurance Alliance,
- Health coverage for unmarried dependents up to age 25 through their parents' individual health plans,
- Part-time employee insurance coverage for employers who choose to offer insurance for their employees, and
- Medicaid outreach to Native American and Hispanic children,

Beginning in July 2006 more *Insure New Mexico!* Solutions will become available. Those include:

- Making it easier for families with children ages zero to five to qualify for the Medicaid program by disregarding a portion of families income,
- Expanding Medicaid prenatal care for women by changing the eligibility from 185% of the Federal Poverty Level to 235%,
- Implementing the premium assistance program for children ages zero to five and pregnant women who do not qualify for Medicaid, but cannot afford health insurance on their own, and
- Implementing the Small Employer Insurance Program for small employers, including non-profit organizations, to voluntarily buy into a state-administered health insurance program.

People interested in learning more about all the *Insure New Mexico!* Solutions are encouraged to call 1-800-204-4700 or log on to www.insurenemexico.state.nm.us



***Insure New Mexico!* Council members: Del Esparza, Esparza Advertising; Secretary Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department; Lieutenant Governor Diane D. Denish, New Mexico; Jeff Dye, NM Hospital Association.**