



PRESS RELEASE

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Child Advocates Call on Governor and Legislature to Target Federal Recovery Act Funds to Those Hurt Most by Recession Openness and accountability should also guide new spending

ALBUQUERQUE—With the nearly \$1.6 billion in federal Recovery Act spending coming to New Mexico, child advocates today urged state policymakers to invest in programs that will give struggling low-income families and unemployed workers new opportunities to succeed economically.

New Mexico Voices for Children also calls on state leaders to embrace and apply the ideas presented in a newly released document, **Principles for State Implementation**, developed by the national Working Poor Families Project and endorsed by 20 national nonprofit organizations. The Principles for State Implementation is attached separately as a pdf.

"With the economy in recession and so many families struggling to get by, we have to make sure that the state focuses some of the stimulus spending on helping those who need the most assistance," said Gerry Bradley, Research Director for NM Voices for Children. "Fortunately, the Legislature is close to passing an increase in unemployment insurance benefits, which is the smartest, most effective way to combat the recession," he added.

"But UI benefits are only the start. The Recovery Act gives the state an opportunity to build a stronger workforce," said Bradley. "We need to invest not just in creating jobs, but in job training and in new energy technologies."

The child advocacy group also encourages the state to maximize its investment in children's health care. "A tiny fraction of the more than \$600 million in federal Medicaid money would be enough to provide health insurance for every child in New Mexico," said Bill Jordan, Policy Director for NM Voices for Children. "This is a rare opportunity to finally achieve health care coverage for all our children, with the federal government paying up to 93 percent of the cost. Passing up this opportunity would be shortsighted. It would also mean breaking a promise to the children of New Mexico that the Governor and Legislature made just a few months ago."

The Principles for State Implementation call for states to direct Recovery Act spending to:

- Create jobs that pay a family-supporting wage and provide critical benefits such as health insurance.
- Ensure that a portion of jobs created go to people with low skills and low incomes, to give them a chance to advance economically.
- Invest in infrastructure projects in distressed communities often overlooked in public works decisions and ensure that residents of those communities are given a chance to work on the projects.
- Support training programs for low-skilled workers, who are far more likely to be out of work in this recession. These programs should be carefully linked to high-growth sectors of the economy.

The principles also call for states to ensure efficiency and accountability by:

- Allocating spending to meet specific goals, including job creation and preservation.
- Using a competitive process in awarding contracts to increase fairness, avoid cronyism, and maximize choice.
- Requiring contractors and agencies to report regularly on how the stimulus funds are being spent and measuring their progress in achieving specific goals.
- Closely coordinating spending among state and local agencies to ensure efficiency.
- Adjusting state policies to take advantage of all federal stimulus funds, including expanded aid for unemployed workers; increasing outreach to ensure eligible New Mexicans receive federal benefits such as child care and Food Stamps.

New Mexico Voices for Children is affiliated with the Working Poor Families Project, a national initiative to improve state policies to benefit low-income workers and their families. The Principles for State Implementation were developed by the Working Poor Families Project and have been endorsed by 20 national nonprofit groups concerned about the effective implementation of the federal Recover and Reinvestment Act.

For more information on the Working Poor Families Project, its Principles for State Implementation, and a list of organizations endorsing the principles, go to www.workingfamilies.org.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
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