



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NM Ranks Last in Percentage of Children in Low-Income Working Families**

New report finds 46 percent of state's children live in low-income working families

Editor's Note: A **conference call** with the authors of "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short" is at 11am MDT today. Please call 1-866-305-2467 and enter code 381405.

ALBUQUERQUE— A new national report, "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," ranks New Mexico dead last in both the percentage of working families that are low income and the percentage of children living in low-income working families.

The report finds that, nationwide, more than one in four working families – a total of 42 million adults and children – were low-income in 2006, earning too little to meet their basic needs. The ranks of the working poor have grown by 350,000 families. This increase came during a period of economic expansion, which suggests that those numbers will continue to grow during the current economic downturn.

"Clearly, fulltime work in America is no longer a guaranteed path out of poverty," said Gerry Bradley, Research Director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "The study also found that 37 percent of the jobs in here in New Mexico are in occupations that pay below the federal poverty level for a family of four," he added. The report ranks New Mexico 48<sup>th</sup> in this measure. The state also ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of low-income working families without health insurance.

"Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short" was produced by the Working Poor Families Project. A follow-up to the 2004 report "Working Hard, Falling Short," it provides detailed data on low-income working families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The report uses data from the 2006 American Community Survey.

The five states with the highest percent of low-income working families are New Mexico, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana; those with the lowest percent are New Hampshire, Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

Among the other findings specific to New Mexico:

- More than half (55 percent) of low-income working families have at least one parent without any post-secondary education, and 34 percent have at least one parent without a high school diploma.
- 48 percent of minority working families are low-income.
- 42 percent of families have housing costs greater than one-third of income.

The report calls for stronger policies for working families at both the state and federal level. Inadequate education plays a major role in preventing low-income workers from climbing the economic ladder, and federal and state resources for adult education or skills training programs meet only about one-tenth of the need.

States that have successfully reduced their number of low-income working families have employed a variety of policies, including investing in job training programs, increasing the minimum wage above the federal wage standard, and supporting initiatives such as paid parental leave for family and medical needs.

The report is attached separately as a pdf and is available online at:

[www.workingpoorfamilies.org](http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org)

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*Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce, and C.S. Mott Foundations to examine the conditions of America's working families. [www.workingpoorfamilies.org](http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org)*

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