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**Health Security Act Has Substantial Support in Legislature  
Governor's Health Solutions Plan Does Not**

**ANNOUNCER'S INTRO:** Governor Bill Richardson has stated that health care reform, and achieving universal health care, are his most important focus for the 2008 30-day legislative session. Should the legislature pass his Health Solutions plan? Comments from Jane Blume from the Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign:

**BLUME:** As the 2008 session unfolds, it is clear that the governor's Health Solutions plan does not have much support - but the Health Security Act does.

Thirty House members have signed the Health Security Act (House Bill 214), introduced by Taos Representative Bobby Gonzales. Only three House members, all from the Democratic leadership, signed the Governor's legislation.

In the Senate, Taos Senator Carlos Cisneros is the sponsor of the Health Security Act (S3). To date, Governor Richardson's bill has not been introduced in the Senate.

This session will see much heated debate about health care reform. First, however, our legislators should decide which of two paths they want to pursue: Should we continue to invest in a failing private insurance system, or should we do something different and set up our own health plan, such as the one created by the Health Security Act?

The governor's plan takes us down a path that requires everyone to purchase insurance or enroll in a public program. For the uninsured, taxpayer dollars are needed to pay for expanded public programs or to subsidize unaffordable insurance premiums.

Our lawmakers are understandably nervous about the Governor's plan because the cost figures and Medicaid assumptions his staff have provided keep changing. We have no idea what the ultimate price tag will be.

Lawmakers know that the Governor's plan requires increased General Fund spending to pay for expanding coverage to the uninsured. They're aware that they have to proceed carefully, because we have other important competing needs (such as education and roads), with limited revenues to pay for them.

We also know that the Mathematica Policy Research study, commissioned by the Governor, shows that the Health Security Act is the only model that costs less than the current system and the only one that saves money. All the other models, including the Governor's proposal, are based on private insurance, cost millions more than the Health Security Act, and add even more complexity to an already enormously complicated health coverage system.

The Health Security Act shifts the role of private insurance to a supplemental one, just as was done when Medicare was established.

The bill sets up a cooperative health plan that simplifies administration and provider paperwork. An independent, non-governmental, geographically representative citizens' commission is responsible for the plan, which guarantees choice of provider - even across state lines - and provides comprehensive services.

The Governor's plan asks us to continue to believe that the private insurance system can be fixed, asserts that the costs are relatively small, and asks us to jump into unknown waters - trusting that everything will work out for the best.

The Health Security Act sets up a careful, three-year implementation process. In the first year the legislature, with public input, independently determines whether the plan is financially feasible before proceeding with the development phase. It is very important that legislators and the public feel comfortable with the costs.

The Health Security Act is the only proposal with substantial public support: 135 diverse organizations and 29 New Mexico counties and municipalities have endorsed it. Only the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce has publicly supported Governor Richardson's proposal.

There's no doubt about it: the Health Security Act really is the solution to our health care crisis.

**ANNOUNCER'S OUTRO:** Jane Blume is the owner and principal of the public relations firm Desert Sky Communications, and the media relations consultant to the Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign.