



For Immediate Release
March 20, 2009

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Governor Bill Richardson Signs Two Domestic Violence Bills

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson has signed two domestic violence bills, including a law that is tough on stalking and a second bill that allows victims of domestic violence to take time off from work to seek an order of protection or attend court proceedings without risking their employment.

“In the past six years New Mexico has made great strides – we have created more shelters for victims, tripled funding for services and increased penalties for repeat offenders,” said Governor Richardson. “I am pleased to sign two very important domestic violence bills – the first gives victims of domestic violence the ability to take time off from work to seek an order of protection or attend court hearings. The second gets even tougher on stalking – and addresses new forms of stalking –like cyber stalking.”

“I am very pleased to see that our movement to end family violence in New Mexico continues to gain momentum,” said First Lady Barbara Richardson.

Senate Bill 68 – Employment Rights for Domestic Abuse Victims

Sponsor: Senator Ortiz y Pino

Senate Bill 68 allows victims of domestic abuse to be granted leave by their employers to secure an order of protection or attend court proceedings. This new employment right requires employers to give leave to employees who are domestic abuse victims to meet with law enforcement, attorneys and attend court hearings without risking losing their jobs. Financial Independence is the key to providing victims of abuse an opportunity to escape a violent relationship. No victim should ever have to chose between holding their offender accountable or keeping their job.

“By passing SB 68, the legislature has made it possible for domestic violence victims to find justice through economic independence; it is long overdue,” said Senator Ortiz y Pino.

Senate Bill 166 - Revise Crime of Stalking

Sponsor: Senator Peter Wirth & Representative Bill O'Neill

Senate Bill 166 broadens the language in the current stalking law to include cyber stalking and other technological methods of stalking. It also gives law enforcement and prosecutors an effective tool to hold perpetrators accountable.

"This bill gives law enforcement officers the tool they need to keep up with the ever changing technology used in stalking," said Senator Wirth.

"We must continue to break down the barriers that prevent victims of domestic abuse from reporting abuse and from leaving violent relationships. Over 71% of the domestic violence homicides in New Mexico occur after a victim has left the relationship, and in nearly 60% of these cases the victim is stalked prior to the murder. Our law enforcement and prosecutors deserve an effective tool to address this crime. I am confident that this change in New Mexico's stalking law will reduce our rate of domestic violence related homicides," said Domestic Violence Czar Sharon Pino.

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