

April 10, 2009

SENATE EXECUTIVE MESSAGE NO. 38

The Honorable Timothy Z. Jennings, President Pro Tempore
and Members of the New Mexico State Senate
State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear President Pro Tempore Jennings and Members of the Senate:

Pursuant to the Constitution of the State of New Mexico, Article IV, Section 22, I hereby VETO and return SENATE BILL 21, as amended, which was enacted during the Forty-Ninth Legislature, First Session, 2009.

Senate Bill 21 has the laudable goal of coordinating state resources and focusing attention on myriad challenges facing Hispanics in New Mexico. I wholeheartedly agree there remains a need to increase access to quality, affordable health care, close the achievement gap in our schools and help more New Mexico families climb out of poverty.

In fact, we have made great strides in all of those areas during my tenure. As Governor, I have worked hard to create a prosperous, high-wage economy. All of my decisions have been geared toward creating opportunities for all New Mexicans, representing all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups, to succeed.

However, the Legislature passed a bill creating a Cabinet-level Hispanic Affairs Department, but did not include any money to fund the department. I cannot support a significant expansion of state government, as this bill proposes, without the funding to implement the changes. It would be irresponsible for a chief executive to take this action, particularly during one of the most severe economic recessions in history.

Supporters of this legislation suggest that I sign the bill and put the framework for the department in place while funding is considered in future legislative sessions. However, the legislation is very specific in that it outlines steps that must be taken should I sign the bill into law. Without funding, there is no practical way to comply with the provisions in the bill. I will not ignore the law and put the state in legal jeopardy if I sign this legislation.

