



A Union of Professionals

2008 U.S. Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Governor Bill Richardson

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Today, more than 46 million students attend our nation's public schools. The teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees who work with these students each day care deeply about the quality of our public schools and the education their students receive.

1. What do you believe are the opportunities and challenges facing public education, and how would your administration deal with each?

The promise of America is that any child, regardless of race or income, can live the American dream—but only if they have access to quality education. In spite of this, the Bush Administration has undermined confidence in our public school system via the unfair and under-funded No Child Left Behind Act. Our challenge today: public schools must be made stronger so all children have the opportunity to live the American dream. Our schools must have the appropriate level of funding to meet the demands expected of them. Nothing is more important to the future of this country than education, and that starts with having the best teachers. Each of us can recall that certain teacher who made a difference in our lives.

Indeed, my first act as Governor was to raise teacher salaries. We started at 46th in the country in teacher pay, now we are 29th. Paying teachers well helps decrease the pay gap between women and men, too, because more teachers are women.

I will emphasize teacher quality. In New Mexico we raised teachers' salaries and teacher accountability by creating a 3 Tiered Licensure System that increases compensation along with increased performance and accountability. We need to provide federal incentives to states that increasingly focus on recruiting and retaining quality teachers. We must provide more incentives for increasing the numbers of national board certified teachers. We did this in New Mexico, and "Education Week" showed that we moved from 30th to 17th in teacher quality in 2005.

We cut administrative overhead and added over \$600 million directly into classrooms, where it belongs. We now have full day kindergarten everywhere in New Mexico and we're doing the same with pre-K. We got the junk food out of elementary schools and physical education back in. Healthy, active, kids learn better. And we kept standards high: New Mexico's math and science standards are ranked 2nd and 4th in the country.

As President I will prioritize recruiting and keeping the best teachers. I will start by helping states establish a minimum wage for teachers at \$40,000 a year. We have to do better than 28th in the world

on science and math. I'd establish science and math academies across the country and I will make sure girls and children of color know that they are welcome at these academies. I will work with states to revise high school curricula to make us more globally competitive. We must keep languages, arts and civics, and go even further by offering flexible distance learning, cyber academies, and greater access to higher education so that students are prepared for college or career in the 21st century.

2. What policies would you support to help close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students?

Many of the policies that are mentioned above will go far in helping to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. In New Mexico, we already have:

- Targeted money for struggling schools to close the opportunity gap;
- Invested an additional \$600 million in new education funding to pay our teachers professional salaries while demanding accountability and results tied to tough licensing standards;
- Raised teacher pay every year, moving New Mexico from 46th in the country to 27th;
- Invested \$430 million in modernizing schools and creating smaller classrooms across the state—tackling more than 1,200 projects in three years;
- Created a Department and Secretary of Higher Education to focus on improved student participation and graduation rates;
- Increased accountability by tasking the Secretary of Education to ensure that money is spent in the classroom, not on administration;
- Recognizing the pervasive poverty in our state, made statewide full-day kindergarten available for free to every 5-year-old;
- Took the first crucial steps toward increasing access to pre-kindergarten to all of New Mexico's 4 year olds;
- Expanded access to school-based health centers;
- Started an anti-obesity initiative that increases access to physical education and phases junk food out of schools;
- Created an Indian Education Act that recognizes specific needs of Native American students;
- Promoted a tough truancy program to help lower dropout rates;
- Required districts to move money from administration to the classroom and meet national standards.
- Created our "Making Schools Work" initiative, which recognizes what the Bush administration continues to ignore: that children within the achievement gap require a comprehensive approach. To this end, we've addressed their needs in several areas by increasing access to school based health clinics, engaging parents in unique ways, providing after school and extended school year opportunities, and promoting healthier lifestyles and diets.

As President, I will continue these efforts by pursuing the following policies:

- **Establish a federal Pre-K program** that helps every state offer voluntary pre-kindergarten for every 4-year-old child.
- **Raise starting teacher salaries to \$40,000.** Support an initiative to raise starting Pre-K-12 teacher salaries to a nationwide average of \$40,000 by 2012.
- **Hire 100,000 new math and science teachers.** Provide the funding necessary to hire 100,000 highly qualified math and science teachers. Provide loan forgiveness programs for those that major in these areas and work in high need areas.
- **Oppose private school tuition vouchers,** especially when funds for vouchers compete with funds for overall improvements in America's public schools.
- **Redesign High Schools.** Most American high schools were designed for the early 20th century—large classrooms with “assembly lines” of children learning rote skills. To help our children compete in the New Economy, we must change the way teachers teach and the way students learn. We must keep languages, arts and civics, and go even further by offering flexible distance learning, cyber academies, and greater access to higher education so that students are prepared for college or career in the 21st century.
- **Promote more parental involvement.** To be successful, students must be able to rely on their parents as well as their teachers for educational support. Teachers can't educate students in a vacuum; education must be a collaborative effort between home and school, and so we must provide supplementary funding for schools to expand their parent-teacher interaction and encourage parents to become more involved in their children's education.
- **Make schools the hubs of America's communities**
 - Develop School Based Health Centers
 - Increase adult education classes
 - Expand the numbers of extended library hours
 - Offer increased numbers of ESL courses
- **Charter Schools.** Be sure that charter schools are held as accountable as regular schools. Support regular public schools transitioning to become public charter schools.
- **Reduce Dropout Rates/Increase Graduation Rates.**
 - Since nearly 50% of all future high school dropouts can be identified during the 8th and 9th grades, we must help states expand their dropout intervention programs by increasing their emphasis on students at these levels.
 - Expand programs that help adults obtain a GED.
- **Make college accessible to every high school graduate who wants to attend**
 - Expand federal loan options. Loosen loan repayment periods.
 - Streamline the federal grant/loan process, and use parents' tax return data to determine need.

- Redirect federal grants/loans paid toward those further down the income scale, so that more students of low-income parents receive federal aid.
- Expand Gear-Up early intervention program, pairing universities with middle schools. Encourage creating college savings accounts while in grade school.

3. What is your view of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)? What changes, if any, would you make to the law and why? What provisions would you retain and why?

The NCLB Act reflects a noble goal, but is unfair and under-funded in its current implementation. It provides meaningless information to parents and communities.

I will make the system fairer by moving from the pass/fail model to one that provides meaningful information to parents and communities about their schools. Adequate Yearly Progress designations by themselves are misleading. I will call for increased fairness by providing appropriate assessments and timelines for proficiency for English Language Learners and Special Education students. Schools should not be measured based on one test. Schools must be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate success.

We can also enhance fairness by recognizing the growth made by struggling schools that have improved. We should allow for multiple measures, and alternate demonstrations, of student mastery. I will ensure that the assessment systems used are fair and appropriate for the students taking them.

I will provide financial incentives to school districts to move their best and brightest teachers to schools where there is the highest need.

When elected president I would create a blue ribbon panel of teachers, principals, etc. to advise me as we make this policy agenda fairer in its implementation and push for appropriate funding.

4. What role do you think early-childhood education should play in the overall approach to children's education?

Quality early childhood programs are essential to ensure a strong foundation for student success. In New Mexico I pushed to pass New Mexico's Pre-K Act, which is a voluntary program for four year olds. I will work with organizations like Pre-K Now to explore the potentials of a federal Pre-K program. This program will coordinate with states to set nationwide quality standards and assist states implementing these programs.

We must fully fund Head Start programs and hold them accountable for performance.

In New Mexico we guaranteed full day kindergarten availability for every five year old. I also signed a bill that was inspired by the Sandra Feldman, the late National President of AFT, called the Kindergarten through 3rd grade Plus Project. The program provides students in high need schools with an additional 20 days of instruction. It is working. AFT Vice President Toni Cortese expressed an interest in coming to visit these schools, and my invitation is always open. I would be proud to show AFT leadership the progress we are making.

5. A growing number of students leave college with overwhelming debt from student loans. This burden, coupled with escalating tuition and fees, makes access to higher education increasingly difficult for many students and their families. What is the role of the federal government in ensuring that higher education is affordable and accessible?

The recent scandals in the student loan program signal a glaring need for reform in how financial aid is administered. The privatization of the financial aid program under the Bush Administration was a mistake. The abuses that took place must be rectified. We need policies that maintain a guaranteed federal loan program that minimizes transferring of costs to future generations. We need enhanced programs, like the PELL Grants, to increase federal work-study programs and reduce the amounts that students have to pay back in the future. Further, we must implement new approaches toward 'high need areas', and loan forgiveness for service areas, including: teaching, nursing, and practicing medicine in rural and under-privileged areas. If the United States is to remain globally competitive there must also be support for those going into other high need areas, including the fields of science, mathematics, technology, and engineering.

6. What actions do you think the federal government should take to support the renovation and modernization of our nation's public school buildings?

A staffer recently told me a story about a good friend of his teaching summer school in Philadelphia. On the first day of class, with students sitting quietly, ready to learn, before class could begin, all was interrupted for the remainder of the day when a water line burst, sending water through several stories of the building. Water flowed through lockers and classrooms, leaving students stranded with nowhere to be taught. This is just one example of how degradation of our school property is undermining our children's education. The federal government must work with states to provide students with a safe, clean, and conducive environment to do it in, so that they are ready to learn.

States shoulder the primary responsibility to ensure that all of America's children are taught in facilities that are clean and structurally sound. In New Mexico, we invested more than \$600 million to modernize our schools. But, while states can, and should, act independently on matters of this kind, aid from the federal government remains a necessity in many cases.

As such, competitive federal grant programs should provide extra points to schools and districts that meet federal building standards. We should establish an Adequacy School Building Fund so that states may apply for matching funds if they can demonstrate a lack of capacity to improve dangerously unsafe school building sites. We also must establish a long-overdue, high-priority, super fund to clean up asbestos and bring all schools into compliance with the highest health and safety codes. Finally, we must explore ways to redesign high schools' so that they can be equipped with wireless technology, keeping our schools current with prevailing technology.

7. What are your views on the privatizing and contracting out of public services, including private school vouchers?

I strongly believe in, and support, our public schools. I have not and never will, support private school vouchers. Instead of a privatizing voucher system that would invariably favor upper-income families, I will increase school choice by supporting public charter, alternative, and virtual, schools. It is the strength of our public school system that makes America strong.

For some small or rural communities in New Mexico, contracting out services remains the only way to provide some much needed services including physical therapy and speech therapy. In some cases, therefore, contracting is still needed. However, those contractors must be held to the same standard of professionalism and accountability as those employed within the public school system. I will not tolerate the kinds of abuses contractors perpetrate with regard to government contracts, as we see the current administration allowing both in Iraq and here in the United States.

Healthcare is an issue that touches all of our lives. Today, *46 million Americans—including more than 8 million children—have no health insurance.* Increasingly, employers are less likely and less willing to provide healthcare coverage for their employees and retirees. Older Americans are paying a larger percentage of their income for healthcare than they did before Medicare was created. And healthcare workers are feeling increasingly overworked and insufficiently supported.

8. As president, what would you do to control skyrocketing healthcare costs while ensuring that all Americans—especially children and the elderly— have access to high-quality healthcare?

American families are struggling under the current system. As a Governor, I deal with these issues every day. I alleviated some of the strain by controlling costs and balancing the budget. It's time for the federal government to step up and get to work. A Democratic President will be inheriting a mess after 8 years of a Republican administration that refused to invest in our nation's health. I had the same problem in New Mexico and am proud of turning our state around by expanding access, improving quality, and controlling costs.

Since 2000, health care premiums for American families rose by over 80 percent. People can't afford it. Every day, 4,000 *more* Americans lose coverage. Everyone ends up paying the price. The high costs are bad enough, but our healthcare system is also inefficient. About 31% of health care expenditures are for red tape instead of direct care. We have 50 different state Medicaid programs and a Medicare system administered by hundreds of different health plans. We need a responsible, common sense approach. My plan combines new ideas and proven methods. It will not create any new government bureaucracies. The system is already there, we just need to use it right.

Imagine everyone having access to the same quality of healthcare as members of Congress and the President. Americans deserve no less. My plan includes the following solutions to achieve universal health care:

- Working families and small businesses will be able to purchase coverage through the same plan that members of Congress and the President have;
- Americans ages 55 to 64 will be eligible to purchase coverage through Medicare;
- Veterans will get access to the high-quality care they deserve, when they need it, without bureaucratic hassles. Under my plan, every veteran retiring from active duty would receive a Heroes Health Card that provides them with a choice of providers wherever they live. No one who serves in our military should have to drive 100 miles to the nearest VA facility just to get health care. It's high time we treat our military personnel and veterans with the respect they deserve, that they earned. I did it as Governor of New Mexico, and I'll do it as your next President.

My plan keeps costs under control through a partnership between businesses, employees, and government—state & federal.

Everyone who needs help in affording coverage will get an advance refundable tax credit based on income.

We will clamp down on credit card companies that charge outrageous interest rates for medical care charges. Lenders need to do their fair share.

Like auto insurance, all Americans will have to have health coverage and employers will pay their fair share of employee health care costs.

We will invest in prevention, streamline administration, and support healthier lifestyle choices. As Governor I have done a good deal of work in this area. We took junk food out of schools and added Physical Education back in. And, just recently, I signed a bill that bans smoking in all public buildings.

My plan is the reasonable and safe path to giving everyone in America access to quality healthcare. With my plan, no new government bureaucracies are created, and families who like their current plans can keep them. We don't need to raise taxes to get things done. We do need to reprioritize how we spend. This administration has spent more than \$400 billion dollars on Iraq. Think of what we could do if we were to spend some of that money right in our own country, on healthcare for Americans.

Now is the time to make this happen. Americans want quality, affordable, health care. My common-sense approach will help all Americans get to that day when they no longer have to worry about how they will afford health care.

9. Many licensed healthcare professionals, particularly RNs, are leaving hospital service because of difficult working conditions, including excessive and unsafe workloads, understaffing and mandatory overtime. What would you do to address these problems and to improve recruitment and retention of nurses and other healthcare professionals?

This is an enormous problem in America, and it will only get worse in the years to come. In New Mexico, I already took many steps to address this issue. In the last four years, we:

- Awarded \$2 million for higher education nursing programs. Last year, funding was awarded to 16 nursing programs that served 8,000 nursing students across the state;
- Instituted financial support and student loan relief for nurse practitioners and nurse midwives in rural communities;
- Streamlined licensing procedures:
 - Funded \$100,000 to the New Mexico Board of Nursing for fiscal year 2007-2008 to enhance on-line licensing for “instant” license renewals,
 - Cut red tape and expedited licensing for healthcare professionals displaced by hurricanes;
- Raised staff salaries by supporting a nearly \$37 million increase in funding for the UNM Health Sciences Center, including a four percent raise in staff salaries;

- Increased the cigarette tax and committed the resulting revenue to improving healthcare facilities around the state;
- Created a single, statewide, behavioral health care entity to coordinate and streamline all public behavioral health services;
- Created the Telehealth Commission and funded this emerging medical technology, which will help nurses, physicians, and other medical staff provide health care to more people, especially those in rural areas.

This is only a glimpse of what we're doing in New Mexico, and as President I will extend these efforts for the whole country. I will ensure the safety of our nurses while on the job by improving safety training. America's nurses are committed to keeping their patients safe and on a path to recovery. We in turn must do the same for them. We can ensure their health and safety by expanding safety training programs and helping hospitals comply with high quality standards.

I will work to protect nurses' pensions. We must give pensions higher priority than management compensation in bankruptcy proceedings. Hospitals and other medical employers must not be able to use bankruptcy as a way to walk away from their pension obligations.

10. We've recently seen several initiatives designed to move health insurance coverage away from an employer-based model. Do you agree with that direction? If so, what would you propose as an alternative to the current system for covering working adults?

I believe in a partnership of employers, employees, and the government. The most important thing to note about my plan is that it offers the widest array of choices, and that it is built upon existing systems. Under my plan, every employer would be required to pay some portion of employee health insurance and every individual would be required to get coverage. The federal government would help those who cannot afford to pay.

Please see my answer to Question (8) above for more details, but again, my plan gets Americans universal coverage through four key steps:

- Guaranteeing coverage for all Americans – and expecting all Americans to assume their share of the responsibility for making the system work.
- Using freedom of choice and existing programs to create the most efficient and effective health care system for giving every American the health care *they* need.
- Reducing the costs of health care for all by helping all families to afford coverage, streamlining administration, promoting prevention, and improving quality of care.
- Paying for universal coverage by creating savings – not raising taxes.

An administration's economic policy has far-reaching implications for the United States and the world. It also says a great deal about a president's priorities and general philosophy regarding how the federal government should relate to its citizens.

11. What are your priorities for the economy? How would your economic plan help restore funding for education, healthcare, transportation, public safety and many other services provided to our citizens?

George Bush has forgotten that the Middle Class exists. Our next president must repair the damage. I can get that done.

In New Mexico we created over 80,000 new jobs since I became Governor. We did it by providing a tax credit to companies that create jobs paying above the prevailing wage, we helped start-up high tech companies, and we provide technical training at community colleges for local jobs. We should be doing this nationally to create good employment here, instead of giving tax breaks for companies that move jobs overseas. And, we must promote fair trade agreements that protect our workers.

Good jobs come from good education. That is why I increased teacher salaries in New Mexico. As president I will push for an average starting minimum wage of \$40,000 for teachers.

Finally, 28th in the world in math and science is not good enough for the United States. As President, I will create a series of science and math academies across the country. We have to start encouraging talented girls to stick with science and math.

12. As president, what would you do to: (a) prevent employers from intimidating and harassing workers who support union representation, (b) ensure that workers are free to organize and bargain in the workplace and (c) protect the rights of American workers?

I support the Employee Free Choice Act so that workers are free to unionize without fear of intimidation or harassment. This act embodies the freedoms Americans should be able to rely on. Being free to organize for better working situations is essential to our way of life. Along with supporting this act, and being ready to implement it, I will appoint a Secretary of Labor who is a union member. Experience in organized labor should not keep someone out of government; it should empower them to use the strength of government to better not just their order, but workers across the country.

13. What would your administration do to extend pension coverage to all employees and to guarantee that both private and public employees' hard-earned pensions are protected?

We must help employers honor their pension promises, and expand coverage to all employees who are eligible. It is time that we gave pensions higher priority than management compensation in bankruptcy proceedings. Companies must not be able to use bankruptcy as a way to walk away from pension obligations. I will work to require that bankruptcy courts consider the debtor company's foreign assets when determining whether or not a company can modify its retiree health and pension benefits. That way off-shore accounts will no longer be havens for executives' personal nest eggs, while former employees are left high and dry. Some international corporations that are struggling domestically use their losses at home to justify breaking contracts with American workers, while their overall company is still thriving. We will end this practice.

We will protect existing private and public sector pensions, and create a universal pension that provides portability for all Americans. It would resemble traditional IRAs, but funds would be transferred directly to a new account when a worker changes jobs. These universal pensions would also be excluded from means testing for federal support programs and student loans/grant.

14. What is your strategy for sustaining and strengthening Social Security and Medicare?

Social Security does not go bankrupt, or even into the red, in 2017. That date is when the Social Security Trust Fund is projected to have to start paying out more than it takes in. That money would be there already if the federal government wasn't using it for other things. The Clinton Administration had put a stop to the sort of reckless spending that is affecting the Social Security trust. George Bush immediately started raiding that Trust Fund, even before 11 September 2001.

The way we keep Social Security solvent is economic growth. The assumption that Social Security will be bankrupt in 2045 is based on an average of just 1.3 percent economic growth. We have to do better than that. We can do better than that.

And, we will, if we get back to a balanced budget, reward companies for creating good jobs here in America, and improve education, especially in science and math.

We must be sure to allocate an adequate amount of funding to the Social Security trust fund each year. America's seniors must be assured that their safety net will not be diminished at any time during their retirement.

I would work to pass legislation to increase protections for the Social Security fund. Money in the Social Security trust fund must not be used for any other purpose, and we need tough laws to protect it.

I will work with seniors, Congress, organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons, and the pharmaceutical companies to reduce prescription drug prices. America's seniors must never be forced to choose between groceries and the medication they need to stay alive. Medicare must have the authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower prescription drug prices, and we must explore re-importation of safe prescription drugs from Canada.

I will help employers honor their pension promises by advocating pensions as higher priority than management compensation in bankruptcy proceedings. Companies must be prevented from using bankruptcy as a way to abandon away from pension obligations.

Labor unions have played and continue to play an important role in the social and economic health of our country. AFT members are interested in knowing your views on the role of labor unions.

15. As president, what would you do to remedy the National Labor Relations Board's October 2006 ruling in the *Kentucky River* cases that greatly expands the definition of "supervisor" and threatens to deny the right of workers to union protection and impede their ability to advocate for quality services without fear of reprisal?

As the question suggests, under President Bush, the right to bargain collectively has been weakened. The NLRB's decision did broaden significantly the definition of a supervisor, thereby effectively eliminating the right of eight million workers to bargain collectively. The single largest affected group is registered nurses.

As Governor, I have worked to restore the rights that unions and union members in this country deserve. One of my first actions upon being inaugurated in 2003 was to restore collective bargaining for public employees in New Mexico, and I later instituted Fair Share.

As President, I pledge the same commitment. I'll sign the Employee Free Choice Act so that unions have a fair opportunity to organize. I'm going to be a President who puts working Americans first.

16. What role do you think unions should play in shaping the economy? In government? In education? In healthcare?

Unions have played, and will continue to play, a critical role in not only our economy, but also government. Organized labor created the middle class, and in the process re-shaped the landscape of our society. The next President must start giving credit where it is due, and reward the efforts of the workers, rather than harming them. The President will have to work very hard to reverse the damage done to workers by the Bush Administration: record debt, stagnant wages, shrinking benefits, rising costs, and the lowest job creation numbers since the Hoover Administration. I am certain that my approach of cooperating with labor, and enabling unions, will be integral in making that work possible.

The next President must strengthen the right to collective bargaining. We must institute card checks—just like I did as Governor in New Mexico. If an employer then fails to bargain in good faith, there should be mediation and arbitration for their contract. I did that, too. And, there should be stronger penalties for employer violations while workers are attempting to form a union. The right to organize, to assemble, is one of our Republic's most coveted freedoms. No person should take it away from another, especially to keep workers from bettering their situations.

Since my administration began, we've helped over 84,000 additional New Mexicans find jobs. We did this by creating a specific tax credit for creating good-paying jobs, and working with organized labor to be sure those are quality jobs. We made our rural jobs tax credit permanent to ensure continued investment in those localities. We initiated a three-year tax holiday for high-tech startups. We invested state money in local companies that showed promise. And importantly, rather than use tax cuts to reward the wealthy, I will continue to use them to reward putting people to work.

I will roll back the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest two percent and keep the tax cuts for the middle class. Instead of tax cuts for the wealthy, I would propose a tax credit for companies that create jobs here in America that pay above the prevailing wage. In New Mexico we only provided incentives for jobs that pay a good wage and provide health benefits. As a result, we became the state with the sixth highest job growth rate in the country. We grew the economy in New Mexico, and I'll do the same as President.

For too long, working Americans have been underappreciated and misunderstood by the current Administration. As President, I will join the efforts of working families and together we will reinstate the rightful place that labor has at the negotiating table. Only then can everyone in our country have a chance at living the American Dream.

17. More than 8 million public employees in 25 states currently have no OSHA protection or entitlement to a safe and healthful workplace. Do you support universal OSHA coverage for all public employees?

Certainly. It is a neglectful failure of our system that some have OSHA coverage, and some do not. Our country will need a committed, strong, healthy, and safe work force to carry our country forward, as they have so many times before in our history. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration must protect workers so they can do the jobs our economy needs them to do. In New Mexico we dramatically increased the state's contribution for health care benefits for state employees. Approaching worker health and safety as a necessity of a productive economy means that OSHA must cover all workers. I will work toward that end because workers deserve a President who works for them as hard as they do.

I have a strong track record, as Governor of New Mexico, of strengthening OSHA standards. For example, in 2004, when it became clear that late night convenience store workers were subjected to an unacceptable number of assaults and batteries, we adopted the strongest regulations in the nation. My regulations set a national standard for protection of these workers by requiring video cameras, panic buttons, limitations on the amount of cash in the stores, better training, better lighting, and, perhaps most importantly, two workers in the store at night. These tough new controls are now in place despite strong opposition and a lawsuit filed by the convenience store industry. I am proud of these new protections. As President, I will continue to fight for the safety of those in hazardous jobs.

My inauguration as Governor of New Mexico followed eight years of a Republican Administration. New Mexico's OSHA bureau was under-funded, understaffed and beleaguered; the situation was so bad that the bureau was turning back over \$100,000 in federal matching funds per year. We corrected this problem by raising the budget, filling vacant OSHA positions, and steering the bureau back onto its historic course as an aggressive advocate for workers.

I also increased budget and staffing for both the enforcement and consultation programs. While resources and staffing for OSHA inspectors have declined nationally since 1970, New Mexico's OSHA has trended upward since I became Governor. As President, one of my goals will be to ensure that the national trend is reversed.

When I became Governor, the state mandated OSHA review commission, which reviews enforcement decisions of the state OSHA bureau, had been dormant for many years. As a result, my state's OSHA enforcement program was largely ineffective. As the incoming Governor, I changed that immediately by appointing an aggressive OSHA review commission. In one example, I ordered rigorous inspections of the oil and gas industry, and the more stringent oversight uncovered an unprecedented series of violations. With these changes, the commission now backs up tough decisions by my OSHA bureau and we've seen an increase in documented violations and penalties.

As my record shows, I have a very strong history of strengthening OSHA. As President I will continue to do so, and will push for extending coverage to all public employees.

18. It is the public policy of the federal government to encourage and promote collective bargaining through the National Labor Relations Act, as set forth in the act's preamble. Thirty-two states have policies that apply similar principles to their public employees. What would your administration do to guarantee these same rights to public employees in the other states?

I strongly believe in collective bargaining: New Mexico is one of those thirty-two states because a little more than two months after I was inaugurated as Governor of New Mexico, I signed legislation to secure the right to collectively bargain. I restored that measure, which, a previous Governor had vetoed an extension of. Our law allows public employees to join labor unions in order to bargain collectively with employers over wages, hours and other working conditions. It also made fair share and card check recognition part of this system. This has worked well for New Mexico, and we can do the same for the United States as a whole.

As I stated above, I will appoint a union member to be my Secretary of Labor. That person will also understand the benefits of collective bargaining, and be set to demonstrate those positives to those states not currently benefiting from the practice. I would not only promote and encourage; my administration would be a vocal advocate of collective bargaining. I have seen the positive effects, and will be sure to impress that upon all state governments.

In survey after survey, Americans identify the war in Iraq as one of the issues with which they are most concerned.

19. What is your proposal for dealing with the conflict in Iraq?

I propose that we end our military involvement in the conflict as immediately as possible.

The Iraq War is costing Americans \$8 billion each month. There is no way to quantify the terrible cost inflicted on our society by the loss of our brave troops, or the immense harm done to the bodies and minds of those who return alive but not unscathed. All of this is paid for little or nothing in return.

By implementing my plan to de-authorize the war and withdraw ALL troops in six months, we can start redirecting these funds and efforts toward what matters most for Americans: improving education, expanding access to quality health care, and addressing the REAL security threats like the Taliban, nuclear proliferation, and global warming. My seven-point 'New Realism' plan for Iraq describes in detail what is required.

First, I demand that Congress de-authorize the President's war. Now. President Bush has demonstrated neither competence nor honesty nor a sense of reality in his conduct of this war. Congress should immediately assert its constitutional authority and pass a resolution de-authorizing the war under Article I of the US Constitution and the War Powers Act.

Second, I am assured that we can get out of Iraq in six months. Once it has de-authorized this war, Congress should set a military pull-out date and appropriate funds accordingly for the re-deployment of troops. My military advisers and I believe we can fully re-deploy within six months of de-authorization. Our continued presence in Iraq only fuels resistance fighters, emboldens the

insurgency, strengthens Al Qaeda, and enables the Iraqi factions to delay making the hard political choices they need to make to end the civil war.

Third, we must remove ALL of our troops. There should be no residual US forces left in Iraq. Most Iraqis, and many others in the region, believe that we are there for their oil, and Al Qaeda, other insurgents, and anti-American Shia groups, exploits this perception. By announcing that we intend to remove ALL troops, we deprive them of this propaganda tool. And, once all US troops are out of Iraq, Al Qaeda foreigners will no longer be able to justify their presence in that country, and the Iraqis will drive them out. We can leave some troops in the region to secure the region and fight Al Qaeda, but we must get them out of the firing line in this civil war.

Fourth, we should promote an Iraqi Reconciliation Conference to bring the factions together to seek compromises and to begin confidence-building measures, including the end of militia violence. Our redeployment will give us more leverage than we have now, caught in the crossfire, to get the Iraqis to reconcile. The only way to honor the loss of so many of our good troops is to figure out whatever way possible toward peace and greater security for the United States.

Fifth, I will work with Iraq's neighbors, and our allies to convene a regional conference to secure the cooperation of all of Iraq's neighbors—including Syria and Iran—in promoting peace and stability. Among the key objectives of such a conference should be guarantees of non-interference, as well as the creation of a multilateral force of UN peacekeepers. The US should support such a force, but it should be composed of non-US, primarily Muslim troops.

Sixth, we are going to need to re-gain the international good will that the Bush administration squandered so wantonly. We should convene a donor conference to fund Iraq's reconstruction. The United States needs to show the world that we intend to return to our tradition of being a trusted leader, not a unilateralist loner. The process of disengagement is an opportunity for us to show that we have turned the corner, and that we intend to rebuild our alliances, respect international law, and work with the international community.

Seventh, to actually secure our country, we must redeploy some of our troops to Afghanistan to stop the resurgence of the Taliban and to fight the real terrorists who attacked this country on 9-11. While all American troops in Iraq must be removed, we need to maintain a military presence in the region, in countries like Kuwait where they are still welcome. We must always have the capacity to use air power, Special Forces and other means to strike Al Qaeda anywhere. We do not need American troops permanently mired in fruitless pitted battles in Iraq to perform these essential tasks. As well, we also must bring our National Guard home, where they belong, where they are needed for actual homeland security. And, we must focus our energy and resources on real threats, such as nuclear proliferation, Al Qaeda, public health, and global warming.

In Conclusion

20. What do you think this nation's priorities should be during the next decade? How would your presidency advance those priorities?

I believe that this election should be based on qualifications, on who has the best vision for this country, on who has the clearest positions, and on who has the most experience.

I've been in the arena. I believe I'm the candidate with the most national security and foreign policy experience. I'm the candidate who has balanced state budgets, expanded access to health care, raised teacher salaries, and protected the environment.

I've been a Governor, and I can govern. I can bring people together, solve problems, and get things done.

I've created 80,000 new jobs and led our efforts in making New Mexico 6th in job growth. And at the same time, I reinstated collective bargaining for public employees and secured the first public works labor agreement in New Mexico history.

I've made New Mexico the clean energy state by adopting environmental standards that *exceed* the international Kyoto standards.

We've cut taxes for every New Mexican, especially New Mexico's middle class.

What this country needs is somebody that can work across party lines. That can end this war. That can restore America's credibility internationally. That can restore the rights of and respect for the working people of this country. That can fight against the effects of global climate change. That can make America become energy independent with a "man on the moon" type of program that eliminates our dependence on foreign oil .

I believe I am the best candidate. I have the best vision and the best background to be President.