

10 Ways in 10 Days Way 9

10 ways budget cuts will hurt working New Mexicans



The Cut: Despite her promises that children would be a priority in her administration, Governor Martinez wants to take away 20 percent of New Mexico's already low pre-kindergarten budget. In just two years, NM Pre-K has lost one-third of its funding and can serve just a fraction of the state's four-year-olds. It does not receive any federal funds and, with only \$12.3 million in the proposed budget, NM Pre-K may have to turn away as many as 850 children next year.

The Consequences: New Mexico's reading scores tell the story: 80 percent of our fourth graders do not read at grade level. Too many of New Mexico's kids are simply not ready to start school, and kids who start behind, stay behind. Several long-term studies have shown that high-quality early childhood care and education programs, like pre-kindergarten, help prepare kids for school, resulting in higher reading scores and greater overall academic success. Two consecutive studies of New Mexico's pre-k program showed that it was having the desired effect—kids were entering kindergarten with greater pre-literacy and pre-math skills. When children start kindergarten with this basic preparation, learning is more likely to be a positive challenge, not a frustrating game of catch up that kids have little chance of winning.

Starting our kids off on the right path toward academic success is not just an educational issue—it is an economic issue. Numerous prominent economists believe that investments in quality early education programs like pre-k return as much as 10 percent per child, per year. Such investments are critical if New Mexico is ever going to have the kind of skilled, educated workforce needed to attract 21st century industry to the Land of Enchantment.

A Better Choice: Governor Martinez and the Legislature need to take a balanced approach to addressing our state's revenue crisis. They should:

- Get rid of tax giveaways that do not create jobs.
- Ensure that profitable corporations and the rich pay their fair share.
- Make big out-of-state corporations and banks play by the same rules as our home-grown businesses.
- Make our system of tax breaks more transparent and accountable.

It's only fair that we stand up for New Mexico families and small businesses.

Urge our politicians to make the *Better Choice for New Mexico*.

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