

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Alliance Seeks Broader Input on Budget Negotiations

Group to launch "20 Ways" campaign on how budget cuts will hurt New Mexicans

ALBUQUERQUE -- A group of small business organizations, faith leaders, working families, education employees, lawmakers, and various advocacy groups, announced today the launch of a statewide alliance to address both the near-term financial challenge of the state's \$433 million budgetary shortfall and the budget's long-term structural problem.

The alliance -- Better Choices New Mexico -- believes a problem of this magnitude cannot be solved behind closed doors with input from only handful of people. In an August 24 letter, several BCNM partners called for these legislative/executive working group negotiations to be open to the public -- in the spirit of the recent conference committee legislation passed last session. These meeting remain private.

"It is disappointing that no one from the working group has responded to our request," said Ruth Hoffman, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry.

"As small business people, working families, and concerned citizens, we have a right to be heard on an issue this important to all New Mexicans," said Vicki Pozzebon, Executive Director, Santa Fe Alliance.

The alliance will also launch its "20 Ways/20 Days" informational series tomorrow. Every day, for 20 days, the alliance will send out a fact sheet that highlights specific examples of how New Mexicans will be hurt by budget cuts. This campaign is part of a larger effort to inform the public of the urgent need to find a long-term solution to New Mexico's budgetary problems. If action is not taken to address this larger problem, New Mexico can expect to see significantly worse shortfalls than the one we are facing this fiscal year.

New Mexico is not alone in this budget crisis. The attached "In Good Company" document outlines ways other states are using a more balanced approach to addressing their budgetary challenges. Also attached is an outline of proposed revenue generating options and additional information on the alliance.

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Better Choices New Mexico consists of: AFSCME, AFT NM, Center for Civic Policy, Community Action New Mexico, Conservation Voters New Mexico, CWA, Health Action New Mexico, IAFF, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, NEA, NM Center on Law and Poverty, NM Coalition to End Homelessness, New Mexico Conference of Churches, New Mexico Voices for Children, Santa Fe Alliance, SWOP, and Economists from New Mexico universities.

Better Choices New Mexico supports a balanced approach to addressing New Mexico's budgetary challenges. This alliance of small businesses, faith-based groups, working families, and nonprofit organizations believes cutting critical services and programs would be a terrible mistake. Instead, the Legislature needs to open the books on tax expenditures, close the loopholes for out-of-state corporations, and rollback the tax breaks for the wealthy.