

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Stephanie Maez-Gibson, Outreach Director,  
NM Voices for Children, (505) 410-0251 (cell)



### **Better Choices NM: 'Balance' Message Heard in Special Session**

ALBUQUERQUE—Better Choices New Mexico released a statement today in reaction to the state budget, which the governor signed today: "Better Choices NM has been working hard since the 2009 special session to convince lawmakers to take a balanced approach to the state's revenue shortfall. That message got through to lawmakers during the special session. Instead of relying entirely on spending cuts—which would have had dire consequences for working New Mexicans—some modest tax increases were passed. We are pleased that legislators and the governor made the right call on some tough decisions."

Since its formation in the summer of 2009, Better Choices NM has provided lawmakers with information about potential revenue sources as well as advice from economists about the best way to deal with a recession. "The economists were all clear on this—tax increases targeted at those who can most afford them are the way to recover from a recession. Drastic spending cuts will only prolong it," said Stephanie Maez-Gibson, the facilitator of the Better Choices alliance.

Not all of the tax increases that were enacted are targeted toward those New Mexicans who earn the highest incomes, but some were. Repealing the deduction for state and local taxes from the state tax return, for example, will mostly affect those with higher incomes. "New Mexico was one of the few states that still allowed this deduction, so eliminating it made sense. Also, this will make our tax system significantly more fair," said Maez-Gibson.

The organization also applauded the Legislature's increase of the cigarette tax. "This tax increase will discourage teenagers from taking up smoking," said Maez-Gibson. "This will save lives of New Mexicans in the long run."

Several other tax measures that the organization advocated—making out-of-state corporations pay tax on their New Mexico profits, and adding a surtax on very high incomes, for example—did not pass.

"Better Choices will continue to work for a tax system that is fair for working families, and that raises enough revenue to support necessary state programs in education, health care and public safety," said Maez-Gibson.

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*BCNM unites New Mexico's faith community, working families, small businesses and nonprofit social advocacy groups that believe it is harmful to scale back investments in education, health care, and public safety.*

*Better Choices New Mexico consists of: Abrazos Family Support Services, America Votes Education and Action Fund, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, American Federation of Teachers NM, Center for Civic Policy, Community Action NM, Communications Workers of America, Families and Youth, Inc., Farm to Table, Hands Across Cultures, Health Action NM, International Association of FireFighters, League of Women Voters of NM, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, National Education Association New Mexico, National Association of Social Workers New Mexico, NM Adult Education Association, NM Child Care and Education Association, NM Coalition Against Domestic Violence, NM Coalition to End Homelessness, NM Conference of Churches, NM Early Childhood Alliance, NM Progressive Action, New Mexico Solutions, NM Voices for Children, NM Youth Providers Alliance, Results-Santa Fe, Santa Fe Alliance, and SouthWest Organizing Project.*

*For more information: <http://betterchoicesnewmexico.com>; [betterchoicesnm@gmail.com](mailto:betterchoicesnm@gmail.com)*