



Office of the Governor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 11, 2021

**Gov. Lujan Grisham, Lt. Gov. Morales, state
leaders
mark one year of COVID-19 in New Mexico**
*After a year of fighting and sacrificing to protect one another,
New Mexico's future is bright*

SANTA FE – **Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham** on Thursday marked the one-year milestone of [the first COVID-19 cases](#) in New Mexico with the following statement:

“Reflecting on the past year, thinking back to where we were last March and all that has happened since, more than anything else I am genuinely and incredibly proud of New Mexicans. As I said in my State of the State address, we are processing the strains of grief, challenged by anxiety about the future, exhausted after months of uncertainty and upheaval. But we have – all of us, in our own individual way – fought for one another, stepped up to protect one another, made sacrifices for people we may never meet but whose health and safety we can take comfort in knowing we helped preserve. We should all make the time to reflect on this. The manifest strength of New Mexicans – the health care heroes, the front-line workers, the first responders, the parents and educators and so many more – is a powerful source of optimism, especially as the end of the pandemic begins to take shape ahead of us. Having weathered the storm, we will take stock of our surroundings, understand we are stronger for having been through it and begin again in earnest the focused work of transforming our state for the benefit of all families and workers.

“As Abraham Lincoln wrote in the middle of the Civil War, the ‘occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion.’ Amid unprecedented challenges, he wrote, ‘we must think anew, and act anew,’ taking up with our whole hearts the opportunity to be ambitious and remake ourselves afforded us by the circumstances. New Mexico has risen to one occasion – squaring up a global pandemic, protecting and

preserving our own to the very best of our ability – and will rise to the next. I am humbled and more honored than ever to lead our state.”

Lt. Gov. Howie Morales issued the following statement:

“As we reflect on this one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 case discovered in our state, I want to say thank you to all New Mexicans for the enormous personal sacrifices they have made. After more than 3,800 deaths and nearly 200,000 infections of this dangerous virus, the way we live in New Mexico today has changed dramatically. As more vaccines now are being made available and more of our residents become vaccinated, I am genuinely optimistic that we will restart jobs and economic activity, and return to relatively normal life.

“I am extremely grateful to New Mexicans for their patience and hard work to protect and help one another through this long year to hold infections, hospitalizations and deaths as low as possible. The extraordinary collaboration on a daily basis of so many of our communities, health care workers, first responders, front line workers, educators, parents, children and neighbors inspires me. Our efforts have been met with a large measure of success, but we recognize that the pandemic is not quite over yet. That is why I urge all of us to continue to protect each other by wearing masks, avoiding gatherings with people from outside our households, maintaining safe distance, washing our hands frequently, and staying home while sick.”

Health Secretary Tracie Collins, M.D.:

“The last year has tested New Mexico in profound ways. But thanks to extraordinary efforts by state employees, health care professionals, and volunteers across the state – including the nation’s most efficient vaccination program – New Mexico is overcoming the pandemic and creating a healthier future.”

Human Services Secretary David Scrase, M.D.:

“Under our governor’s leadership, New Mexico has been at the top of the national list in four areas that have mattered most in controlling the pandemic: public health orders to reduce viral transmission, testing, contact tracing, and vaccination. In addition to these, I am particularly grateful for the incredible work of the Medical Advisory Team, which brought our state’s health care delivery system into a single effort to ensure that we were fully prepared, every resource was used wisely, and that we never had to formally ration healthcare (despite coming to the brink of having to do so). Without the combination of these efforts, we would have seen over 9.2 times as many COVID-19 cases (1,895,050), 6.6 times as many hospitalizations (94,753), and four times as many deaths (18,951).

“Knowing that we have saved over 15,000 New Mexican lives is incredibly gratifying for every state of New Mexico and health care employee. Every day, we are vaccinating more than 40 people for each new case – which is rapidly accelerating our progress toward the end of this pandemic.”

New Mexico National Guard Maj. Gen. Kenneth Nava:

“Since last March, more than 1,000 New Mexico National Guard soldiers and airmen have answered the call to assist agency partners and the citizens of New Mexico with combatting COVID-19. Under the direction of Governor Lujan Grisham, the New Mexico National Guard has successfully completed over 1,150 missions during this pandemic on behalf of New Mexicans throughout the state and our tribal lands.

“At the beginning of this historic mission, our soldiers and airmen delivered over 650,000 gallons of water and over 915 pallets of food and supplies to people in need. They have delivered over 4 million pieces of vital PPE to emergency responders and health care professionals around the state.

“To date, our guardsmen and women have set up over 200 test sites and administered over 380,000 COVID tests. And they are currently carrying out the vital role of storing and distributing vaccine throughout the state. Our guard medical professionals have vaccinated over 35,000 New Mexicans.

“I am very grateful for the tremendous work our soldiers and airmen have done throughout the past year of historical service, and I’m honored to continue to lead the New Mexico National Guard as we all emerge from these abnormal times.”

Economic Development Secretary Alicia J. Keyes:

“We are coming out of a year of unfathomable grief for families, businesses, workers, and the victims of this horrible and unfair pandemic. As we heal, New Mexico will be stronger, more resilient, and ready to refocus. Thanks to initiatives by the Legislature and Gov. Lujan Grisham, the Economic Development Department is ready to help build a secure economic future for all communities that leaves no one behind.”

Workforce Solutions Secretary Bill McCamley:

“Governor Lujan Grisham’s entire administration understands how hard the COVID-19 pandemic has been on New Mexicans, and New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions has been one of the nation’s leaders in implementing new programs and putting resources into the pockets of our neighbors. Our department will continue to provide benefits to those that need them as quickly as possible while also working towards restarting our economy and preparing individuals with the tools and resources needed to return to work.”

Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart:

“This past year posed almost unimaginable challenges to New Mexico's public education system, and I couldn't be prouder of how our educators – from administrators to classroom teachers to cafeteria workers – rose to meet those challenges, one wave after

another. When schools closed last March, they innovated and collaborated to create effective online classrooms to keep our children engaged in learning and to continue providing the meals so many of them depend on. Public-private partnerships formed to bridge the digital divide by putting Chromebooks in the hands of children, by creating internet hotspots, and by running fiber to communities that never had it before. As we moved to expand in-person learning in the fall, administrators climbed on roofs or descended into basements to check air filters; they put up partitions, measured distances between desks and dutifully counted the number of face masks and cleaning supplies on hand.

“New Mexico families also rose to new challenges, partnering with educators to help their children log in and learn from home, keeping them on task even as many were working remotely themselves.

“As a result of the incredible commitment from these families, these educators, and every New Mexican who contributed by staying home, wearing a mask and washing hands, we are now on the verge of a new normal in which teachers and students can be together again in classrooms, which we know is the gold standard for education.”

Tourism Secretary Jen Schroer:

"Over the past year, New Mexico's hospitality and tourism industry has made incredible sacrifices throughout this pandemic in order to protect fellow New Mexicans. Hotels opened their doors to fellow New Mexicans when hospitals needed help. Restaurants provided meals to frontline responders working to save New Mexicans. Businesses put plans on hold.

“And because of those sacrifices, New Mexico can look forward to the prospects of a reopened tourism economy. Over the past year, the New Mexico Tourism Department connected hospitality businesses with the information, resources and counseling that business owners needed to help weather the storm. The Tourism Department also repositioned its efforts on preparedness so that when we can promote leisure travel again, communities and tourism destinations are well-positioned to capitalize on the demand as we enter a new era for tourism.

“While we are optimistic for the future, we still have work to do. Prioritizing investment in tourism at the state and local level will help reignite commerce and bring New Mexicans back to work. When we can begin to regenerate the demand for travel, we will be able to forge a path for economic recovery for all of New Mexico.”

Environment Secretary James Kenney:

“Our actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that our North Star is and will continue to be the health and safety of New Mexicans. I am proud of the dedicated team of unwavering professionals at the Environment Department who

brought certainty to tens of thousands of businesses while protecting New Mexicans in their places of work.

“Because of the actions of New Mexicans and our department, we are now responding to the lowest number of COVID cases in workplaces since October 2020. We know this has been an incredibly difficult time for businesses – today, we say thank you for all of your hard work to keep your employees safe. We will continue working 24-7 to ensure New Mexico workplaces are open and safe for employees and customers.”

Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo:

"Native American communities are among the hardest hit in the country, but New Mexicans can be proud that under Governor Lujan Grisham's leadership, New Mexico was one of the few states to include tribal communities in our response. We pivoted to provide over 2,661,302 pounds of food, 39,260 nights of shelter, and \$28 million into self-determined projects supporting tribal relief and recovery.”

Early Childhood Education and Care Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky:

“From the beginning of the pandemic, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, as a new agency launched in July 2020, had to adapt, learn, collaborate, and then continue providing the services our communities so desperately need. Child care centers and home providers continued to care for our youngest residents; food sponsors delivered meals directly to families and community partners; home visitors stayed connected to families through telehealth and helped them access the resources they needed; Family Infant Toddler programs evaluated children and provided early intervention services to those with developmental needs; Families FIRST nurses provided vital prenatal services and Medicaid eligibility assistance while supporting our state’s massive testing and vaccination efforts; and, PreK programs continued to educate young students through in-person, hybrid, and remote models. While we have lost much during the past year, including our own family members and colleagues, ECECD has seen that our state is strong, resilient, and united and will come out of this pandemic with the knowledge and experience to recover and then improve. And improve we must.

“Life may never be the same as it was prior to the pandemic and the new normal will most certainly look different. What matters is that we move forward with the knowledge and experience we collectively gained during this public health crisis and continue to enhance the early intervention, care, and education provided in New Mexico. Our children and families desperately need our continued help as we navigate toward what is hopefully the end of this pandemic.”

Children, Youth and Families Secretary Brian Blalock:

"In the midst of all the challenges and hardships created by COVID, CYFD has come together as a team to lift each other up, stay focused on our mission of serving those in need, and adapt in creative ways to provide – and even improve upon – the support and

services New Mexico's youth and families need. I believe many of the solutions we found will endure well beyond the pandemic as we look ahead to better days."

Higher Education Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez:

"The New Mexico Higher Education Department and our state's colleges and universities have collaborated from the start of the pandemic to provide COVID-safe instruction and services to our students, and have been key partners in providing testing and vaccines to communities across New Mexico. Our state and federal financial aid programs have enabled students to continue their education despite the pandemic, and the education and training programs offered by our higher education institutions will be integral to restarting our economy and empowering our citizens to access family-sustaining careers moving forward."

Homeland Security and Emergency Management Secretary Bianca Ortiz Wertheim:

"This year, New Mexicans have come together like never before, and our emergency managers and first responders have taken on extraordinary challenges to keep us safe.

"From the beginning, our state has led the nation in pandemic response. As soon as the first U.S. cases of COVID-19 were confirmed, Governor Lujan Grisham moved to assemble emergency specialists, acquire PPE, and obtain critical data on how the virus spreads. While other states were downplaying the pandemic and hoping it would go away, New Mexico was taking action – and there is no doubt this proactive response saved lives.

"At the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, we were ready to follow the governor's lead. Our expert staff has worked tirelessly to protect our communities and connect them with resources. Our department has been privileged to coordinate with tribal leaders to distribute food, water, PPE, and vaccines. We have worked with local and federal partners to secure vital supplies, and DHSEM has already distributed \$45 million in federal aid to agencies and nonprofits across the state.

"But before we look forward to 'normal life,' we must invest in our communities and design forward-looking strategies to ensure our state never faces the fear and uncertainty of one year ago. This experience is personal for our team. Many of us have felt the scourge of this virus, and we will continue to lean forward in preparing and protecting New Mexico."

Aging and Long-Term Services Secretary Katrina Hotrum-Lopez:

"To the thousands of people living in long-term care settings and their families: One year ago, we began our battle against a vicious virus that took so many of our beloved seniors. My deepest and most heartfelt sympathies go out to everyone who lost a loved one over the past year – whether they had COVID or not, it was a year where celebrating

and grieving a life was complicated, if not impossible. I'm so proud of New Mexicans because even in the midst of this pain and suffering, we've seen resiliency, innovation, and pure kindness, and every day we get closer to being able to being together. Keep your hope New Mexicans, we are in this together, and we will get through this together."

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