

URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/state/290754nm03-06-08.htm>

Thursday, March 6, 2008

## Gov. Vetoes \$7M In Senate Pork

By [Barry Massey](#)

*The Associated Press*

SANTA FE— Gov. Bill Richardson used his veto pen to cut \$7 million in capital improvement financing, and members of the Senate were on the losing side.

The Senate has bucked Richardson on a number of issues, including the governor's top priority this session: a plan to expand health care coverage.

Richardson signed a bill (SB 471) into law Wednesday to provide \$341 million for capital improvements, often called pork, across the state. But he vetoed \$7 million for projects, and all were sponsored by members of the Senate, according to an analysis by the Legislative Finance Committee.

Among the casualties of Richardson's vetoes: \$500,000 for renovation of a law enforcement complex in Deming, which is the hometown of Sen. John Arthur Smith, a Democrat and chairman of the Finance Committee. The governor has complained that the committee didn't consider a water-downed version of his health care proposal after it passed the House.

Senate Republican Whip Leonard Lee Rawson of Las Cruces said the vetoes appeared politically motivated. He had more projects vetoed than any other senator: \$508,000.

"It's absolutely personal," Rawson said of the governor's vetoes. "They were targeted vetoes."

Gilbert Gallegos, a spokesman for Richardson, said in a statement: "Sen. Rawson has been purely partisan and defiant as a state senator. He is not willing to work with the governor in the best interest of New Mexico."

Richardson, in his veto message for the capital improvements, said many of the projects "lack proper planning, are outside of established funding processes, or are not ready to proceed." The governor pointed out that projects were financed with small allocations of money—less than \$25,000—and said that was contrary to funding guidelines.

"Regretfully, I believe it is necessary and fiscally prudent to veto some projects that might otherwise have merit," the governor said in a statement.

Also cut was more than \$900,000 for projects at schools in Albuquerque, including to buy video conferencing and computer equipment and classroom furniture and make some building renovations.

The athletic department at the University of New Mexico also felt the sting of Richardson vetoes: \$10,000 for a "plasma television and related equipment," \$10,000 for weight room equipment and \$30,000 for field maintenance equipment.

The capital improvement package is an important measure for members of the Legislature because it finances many projects in their home districts. Money also is provided for statewide projects earmarked by the governor and legislators, including money for pre-kindergarten classrooms and several high-profile economic development projects in the Albuquerque area.

Among the projects financed by the capital outlay bill:

- \$7.5 million for construction of a port of entry at Lordsburg.

- \$4.5 million for an automobile assembly facility in Albuquerque for Tesla Motors, which plans to build an electronic car.
- \$7.5 million to assist with a solar energy equipment manufacturing plant to be built at Mesa Del Sol in Albuquerque.
- \$7.5 million for infrastructure for a planned building for a financial services company moving to the Mesa Del Sol development.
- \$6.5 million for a skilled nursing facility and Alzheimer's unit at the New Mexico State Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences.
- \$6 million for construction of a building for the state Court of Appeals in Albuquerque.
- \$5 million for construction of a substance abuse treatment facility in Los Lunas; and \$3 million for pre-kindergarten classrooms statewide.

Wednesday was the deadline for Richardson to finish action on bills passed by the Legislature during its 30-day session. Of the 107 bills approved by lawmakers, Richardson signed all but 14.

Associated Press writer Deborah Baker contributed to this report.

[Back to story page](#)