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Public Comments from July 26, 2006

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TO: GOVERNOR'S ETHICS REFORM TASK FORCE
FROM: DEAN SUELLYN SCARNECCHIA
SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM 7/26/06
DATE: 7/27/06

Around 3:30 p.m. yesterday, after the taskforce adjourned, a group of people arrived to participate in the public comment portion of the meeting. The following is a summary of those comments and recommendations.

Jeanne Carrit. Ms. Carrit expressed her concern regarding the need for election reform. She believes that many of the problems today stem from the problems with the election process. She expressed the need for better education with respect to voting issues, recent events and new requirements, including the paper ballots and use of a voting id card. She participates in the Democracy for New Mexico group, whose website has information on these issues.

Mary Ellen Smith. Ms. Smith commented that just because something is legal doesn't make it ethical and stated that she did not believe the law could take care of everything.

John Raess. Mr. Raess wanted to expressed support for the taskforce. He noted that he has changed parties twice because of ethical issues. He expressed concern with the "pay to play" culture of corruption in our state, naming Robert Vigil and Michael Montoya. He discussed the idea of a political industrial complex in New Mexico state government and cited the Attorney General soliciting donations from various organizations as an example. He believes there needs to be increased accountability for public funds. He also mentioned the recent story about the Governor paying an out of state consultant for ideas and not disclosing them and said, "that is the way business is done in New Mexico". He said this is a big problem and we needed to regain a culture of serving the public. **Recommendation: He suggested that retired people be asked to volunteer a day a week to serve a fiscal monitoring function and report how public dollars are spent.**

James E. Templeton. Mr. Templeton expressed concern regarding the role of lobbyists in running state government, citing the example of donated travel. He can't see how these gifts don't bear on decisions of policymakers. He gave credit to the Albuquerque Journal for making the public aware of the Robert Vigil trial and suggested that if it wasn't for that reporting, the AG would have never investigated the office. He believes that the lack of interest in elections is due to the belief that lobbyists run things. He favors salaried legislators and total limits on campaign contributions. He suggested that state officials should lose their retirement if they violate law/ethical rules. **Recommendation: He said we should provide more notice to the public regarding the taskforce meeting times and places and suggested that having them at night would allow more people, including younger working people, to participate.**

Bob Walko. Mr. Walko said the movie V for Vendetta expresses his sentiments well. People should not fear government; government should fear the people. He worked at Sandia Labs and he said there you couldn't even have an appearance of impropriety. He favors a ban on all gifts. He said he feels like legislators and other public officials are basically our "paid slaves" until they are out

of office. He thinks that legislators should be required to take public transportation to work, wear name tags to prove that if it's good enough or safe enough for the public, it's good enough for them. He believes that certain traditions in New Mexico just need to go away, specifically public officers receiving gifts. He identified himself as an Independent. Last, he believes that there should be sanctions for public officials telling lies and said there needed to be a public referendum available in NM.

David Durrah. Mr. Durrah believes term limits would be a very good start and a quick fix to solving some of the corruption issues.