

SOMOS UN PUEBLO UNIDO

1804 Espinacitas St. Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505) 424-7832 somos@rt66.com

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 24, 2011

Contact: Marcela Díaz 505-670-9301

Statewide Immigrant Rights Group Rejects Martinez Driver's License Plan, Supports Safety of All New Mexicans

Santa Fe, NM – *Somos Un Pueblo Unido (Somos)*, a New Mexico immigrants rights group has been promoting a balanced discussion related to the State of New Mexico's law regulating drivers' licenses for foreign nationals. Today, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF), the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization, filed a lawsuit against the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department seeking to stop the implementation and execution of the so-called "Residency Certification Program."

In response to the lawsuit, *Somos*' Executive Director Marcela Diaz issued the following statement:

"We applaud MALDEF and the New Mexico legislators for taking an important stand on an issue that has strong local and national ramifications.

We have long contended that this new driver's license re-verification program is flawed, ineffective, costly, and unfair. New Mexico families who have complied with state law are being targeted and harassed. They have already gone through the process of applying for a license, taking the required exams, buying insurance and presenting a driving record to the state and law enforcement officials. The people affected by this "re-verification" program are not faceless criminals- they are our family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers.

We are in favor of strengthening current law to protect our families and neighbors; this should be done in a fair, efficient, cost effective and legal way. It can be done through regulations or statutory amendments strengthening residency requirements and punishing anyone who commits fraud. However solutions to fix the issue of enhanced tracking of foreign nationals are not even being considered by the Governor's proposals. Instead the administration has created a program that is designed to fail because it makes it impossible for the majority of our families to comply. The procedure is onerous, and confusing. People are scared and have nothing to gain by driving to Albuquerque to resubmit their documents, as they can later reapply for a license at their hometown MVD.

The Governor should be working with the New Mexico Legislature to find common ground on this issue; instead she's overstepping her authority.

We are hopeful that MALDEF's involvement and leadership on this issue will foster a balanced discussion that ensures strong residency requirements, punishes fraud and provides a means for all residents of New Mexico to drive legally in the state."

XXX

Somos Un Pueblo Unido spearheaded a campaign in 2003 with law enforcement officials, victims rights agencies, and faith and civil right group groups, to allow qualified immigrant drivers to apply for licenses, obtain insurance, and register their vehicles. Visit SomosUnPuebloUnido.org for more information.