

Somos Un Pueblo Unido

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Temporary Restraining Order Issued Against Taxation and Revenue Department

Driver's license re-certification program challenged in court, temporarily halted

Santa Fe, NM—Today, New Mexico District Court Judge Sarah M Singleton issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) that puts a stop to Governor Martinez's so-called "Residency Certification Program" for foreign nationals. *Somos Un Pueblo Unido* believes the program is inefficient, costly, confusing, and is being used to intimidate immigrant families in New Mexico who have already complied with state law by obtaining their licenses, registering their vehicles, buying insurance and presenting a record available to MVD and law enforcement officials.

Humberto, a 17-year resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico who is currently in process of legalizing his immigration status but is still ineligible for a social security number had this to say, "I am relieved that the program has been halted. MVD has made it impossible for me to comply within such a short time frame, and I was nervous that my license would be cancelled. I was told I could re-apply for a license at my local MVD, but that could take months. What would happen to my registration and insurance in the meantime?"

Luz, a longtime resident of Lovington, New Mexico talked about the TRO, "I had surgery recently, and my doctor said I should be resting. It's not a good idea for me to make the five-hour trip to ABQ, but this fell on deaf ears at MVD. I'm glad the program has been temporarily blocked, but I worry what will happen if the program is allowed to continue. It would be costly to my family and a big inconvenience."

"The re-verification program is nothing more than a bullying tactic that intimidates and threatens people for no reason," said Marcela Diaz of *Somos Un Pueblo Unido*. "This TRO will come as a relief to many families who simply couldn't comply with this absurd program. New Mexico needs our leaders to agree on a sensible license policy, not one that unnecessarily and unfairly targets immigrant families who have gone through the proper channels to get their license. Getting rid of the current law and continuing the re-verification process doesn't make sense—it punishes people for being honest and would force foreign nationals to drive without proper licensure and insurance," Diaz said.

Governor Martinez has said she will again aim for repeal of the current driver's license law during the special session, scheduled to begin September 6. During the 2011 regular legislative session, Martinez refused to support legislation passed by the Senate that would have tightened residency requirements and given law enforcement more tools to do their jobs and created a harsher punishment for fraud.

Under the current law, previously unregistered foreign nationals are cataloged in a database which can be accessed by city, state, and federal law enforcement officials, making them traceable and accountable to New Mexico's laws.

To speak to New Mexico residents who have received the re-certification letter and who could not comply, please contact Marcela Díaz at 505-670-9301.

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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.