

New Mexico State Land Office

Patrick H. Lyons, Commissioner of Public Lands



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CONTACT: Kristin Haase, Assistant Commissioner, State Land Office, 505-827-3809

Land Commissioner Pat Lyons: “I’m not the problem, I’m the solution!”

Seriously?

That’s what Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons had to say after Governor Bill Richardson slammed him for announcing he would not furlough State Land Office employees.

Responding to the governor’s charge that he had “yet to take an active role in helping the state shore up its budget shortfall,” Commissioner Lyons said, “The State Land Office generates an average of \$500 million a year for public schools, universities, hospitals, correctional facilities, and the other state supported programs that rely on the Land Office to meet their budgets.”

“Furthermore,” the commissioner said, “I have consistently requested a flat budget of \$13 million; reverted \$5.85 million in unspent budgeted monies; reduced staff by four full time equivalents (FTEs); and not paid any employee more than \$100,000 annually. Maybe the governor should follow MY lead.”

The Land Office is a non-general fund agency, meaning it supports itself by leasing state trust lands for energy production, farming and ranching, and business and community development.

“I’m not the one who hired 400 friends and paid them excessive salaries, or spent exorbitant amounts of money on my pet projects, or paid corporations and movie producers to do business with the state, or spent every penny of last year’s \$400 million revenue windfall, which by the way is pretty close to what we need to bridge the budget gap.”

“I’m not the problem, I’m the solution.”

And as for not “paying attention to what’s been going on out there,” Commissioner Lyons maintains that paying attention and having the foresight to be prepared is why his employees will see more money in their paychecks over the holiday season.

“The governor argues that “at least 21 other states have ordered furloughs,” but I say New Mexico shouldn’t even be in that pool, and with a little fiscal responsibility we wouldn’t.”

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