

# Healthy Kids, Healthy Economy

## *NM Grown Produce for School Meals*



**2009 Legislative Sponsors: Representative Rhonda King & Senator Pete Campos**

**Funding of \$3.3 million is being requested for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables, New Mexico-grown when available, for school meals. This funding will help to ensure that our state's young people develop life-long nourishing eating habits that promote health and academic achievement. It will also help to strengthen our farm and ranch economies, preserve our environment, and reduce the cost of treating diet-related diseases.**

### **The Threats:**

- The percentage of New Mexico's children who are obese and overweight is growing.
- The risk of being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes is now 30 percent for boys, 40 percent for girls, and even higher for Hispanic and Native American children.
- Merely 25 percent of children ages 2 to 11 consume even three servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Students who do not get proper nutrition have lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates.

*If we don't reverse these risks by improving our young people's diets, we are in danger of raising the first generation of American children with a lower life expectancy than their parents.*

### **The Solution:**

We know that healthy eating habits formed during childhood decrease the risk of chronic disease. We also know that children will increase their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables when those foods are available, affordable, and tasty. Our five-year goal, therefore, is to turn back the rising tide of poor nutrition by providing at least two servings of the highest quality fresh fruit or vegetables each school week to every New Mexican student. And, to strengthen our farming communities and increase farmer incomes, we will purchase that food from New Mexico farmers when it is seasonally available.

### **Important facts:**

- Close to 221,000 lower income NM children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. These children eat less produce due in part to its relatively high price: since 1989 fresh fruit and vegetable prices have *increased* by 40% compared to a 20% *decrease* for high sugar and high fat foods.
- School food service budgets are entirely separate from the rest of school budgets. Except for the \$85,000 mentioned below, New Mexico does not provide funding for school food service. Schools receive approximately \$1 per meal from federal reimbursements to cover all food costs.
- Obesity currently costs New Mexico an additional \$324 million for health care.
- The less distance that food must travel, the fewer carbon emissions – NM food going to NM students helps to address climate change.
- If every NM consumer purchased only 15 percent of their food from the state's farmers and ranchers, it would increase annual farm income by \$392 million.
- The 2007 Legislature allocated \$85,000 to Albuquerque Public Schools which purchased NM apples, melons, carrots, and other produce for 6,000 school children. The 2008 Legislature supported the NM Grown Produce for School Lunches bill, but funding was not appropriated.

$\$3,358,027 = 181,515 \text{ students that eat school lunch} \times 74 \text{ servings (2 per week} \times 37 \text{ weeks)} \times 25 \text{ cents per serving}$