

## **HCS/CS/S 1273 CORRECTIONS POPULATION**

April 9, 1997

### **SENATE EXECUTIVE MESSAGE NO. 36**

I have this day VETOED and am returning HOUSE TAXATION AND REVENUE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL 1273, enacted by the Forty-Third Legislature, First Session, 1997.

Issues associated with our state prison system have been the source of much debate over the past several years. The number one priority for the Corrections Department is to build two new prisons as provided for in the laws of 1995. At such time as the laws of 1995 have been successfully implemented, the administration may consider many of the initiatives outlined in this bill.

This bill has provisions for truth in sentencing, elimination of the Correction Commission and a definition of earned good time, all of which are worthwhile initiatives. However, the provision for the building of additional prison beds effectively repeals the laws of 1995. The fear is that by doing so we will once again be starting from scratch when it comes to building new prisons in New Mexico. Our need for additional prison space has been well documented over the past several years and failure to build prisons has only exacerbated the problems of overcrowding and effective prison population management.

The first step on the path to creating a first rate corrections system is to build the two new facilities as they are mandated by the laws of 1995. This legislation seeks to place the state years behind in this process.