



— State of —
North Dakota
Office of the Governor
John Hoeven
Governor

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**HOEVEN: STATE WILL ADMINISTER CHILD SUPPORT
ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM**

Move Will Result in Continued Quality Service for Children, Property Tax Relief

BISMARCK, N.D. –Gov. John Hoeven today signed Senate Bill 2205, which transfers funding and administration of the child support enforcement program from counties to the state Department of Human Services. The measure will result in continued quality services for children and property tax relief for citizens. The law takes effect on July 1, 2007.

Joining Hoeven for the signing were bill sponsors Sen. Tom Fischer; Sen. Judy Lee; Sen. Tim Mathern; Rep. Kathy Hawken; Rep. Clara Sue Price; and Rep. Robin Weisz. Also in attendance were House Majority Leader Rick Berg; Senate Majority Leader Bob Stenehjem; House Minority Leader Merle Boucher; and Senate Minority Leader Dave O’Connell.

The bill provides state funding for child support enforcement and requires counties to provide a recommendation on how the reduction in county funding responsibility will be passed on to property taxpayers. Savings to the counties in the 2007-09 biennium are projected at \$5.3 million, with additional projected savings in the 2009-11 biennium of at least \$9.1 million, for a total of nearly \$15 million, which the legislation requires to be passed on to local property tax payers. The bill appropriates \$12.5 million of total funding in the 2007-2009 biennium, and nearly \$13 million in funding is projected for the 2009-2011 biennium.

Hoeven praised bill sponsors for their leadership on the effort. “This is a win for children and families, and a win for local taxpayers,” Hoeven said. “This provides property tax relief above and beyond the dedicated property tax relief plan we’re working on.”

Consolidation of funding and supervision of staff at the statewide level will increase opportunities for specialization, leading to greater efficiency program-wide and greater ability to focus attention on uncollected support, said Mike Schwindt, Child Support Enforcement Director for the Department of Human Services.

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“This is an opportunity to build upon the many strengths of the state’s child support enforcement program to serve children and families even better,” Schwindt said. “The combined efforts of dedicated individuals at the regional units and state office have made North Dakota one of the top performing child support enforcement programs in the country. A state-administered program will create opportunities for specialization, greater consistency of services statewide, and better communication.”

North Dakota’s program has received national recognition, ranking second in the country in performance for the last two years and, most recently, winning the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council’s 2006 Outstanding State Program award.

“This has been a work in progress for almost eight years,” said Mark Johnson, director of the Association of Counties. “A lot of us felt it was the right thing to do, and we appreciate the Governor’s support for it.”

Under the legislation, the state will maintain an office in each of the eight current planning regions. All existing employees of the regional child support enforcement agency will become Department of Human Services employees and will receive a salary not less than the salary received as an employee of the regional child support enforcement agency, plus any increase for all state employees that is provided on July 1, 2007.

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