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**FOR – Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 22, 2010**

**NEW MEXICO JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION COMMISSION
ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENTS OF CO-CHAIR AND TWO NEW MEMBERS**

SANTA FE—The **New Mexico Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC)** has announced the appointments of **Denise M. Torres** of Las Cruces as co-chair and **James Hall** of Santa Fe and **Lorri McKnight** of Alto as new members. JPEC was established by the Supreme Court of New Mexico in 1997 to improve the performance of New Mexico's judges and provide useful, credible information to voters on judges standing for retention elections.

Torres was appointed to JPEC as a member in 2008 and serves as co-chair of JPEC with Felix Briones, Jr. She has been an attorney for 16 years and is a partner with the firm of Saenz & Torres, which limits its practice to personal injury, wrongful death and medical malpractice. She is a native New Mexican from Truth or Consequences and was a Presidential Scholar at the University of New Mexico, earning an undergraduate degree in 1989. She was a National Hispanic Scholar while earning a *Juris Doctor* degree from the University of New Mexico in 1993, graduating with honors in clinical law.

Hall was appointed a district court judge in the First Judicial District in 1995. He was elected in 1996, retained on the bench by voters in 2002 and 2008 and retired in 2009. While on the bench, he served in the First Judicial District's Civil Division, Criminal Division and Family Court Division. He was twice elected Chief Judge by his colleagues and also acted as the first Drug Court Judge for Santa Fe.

Prior to being appointed, he worked in private practice and served in the First Judicial District Attorney's Office, as well in the New Mexico Attorney General's Office.

Hall received his undergraduate degree from DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana and his law degree from the University of Michigan School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He currently has a private law practice in Santa Fe specializing in mediation and arbitration.

McKnight is vice president of lending for City Bank New Mexico in Ruidoso. She has more than 27 years of professional experience, including previous positions as manager and finance

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director for the Village of Ruidoso, bank examiner for the State of New Mexico Regulation & Licensing Department Financial Institutions Division, and as a Certified Public Accountant.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, and a Master of Business Administration degree in Management and Organizational Behavior from the University of Houston in Houston, Texas. In addition, she completed doctoral studies at the University of Houston and accounting courses at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. She is a licensed CPA and a licensed real estate agent in New Mexico.

McKnight volunteers as a board member and secretary for the Alto Lakes Golf & Country Club. She is a former member of Kiwanis, the Rotary Club, and a graduate of both Leadership Lincoln and Leadership New Mexico. She served as president of the New Mexico City Manager's Association from 2005-2007 and is a former board member of the Ruidoso Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The New Mexico Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission is comprised of 15 individuals – seven lawyers and eight non-lawyers—who are appointed by the Supreme Court to staggered terms. Members are selected from nominations made by the Governor, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Speaker of the House, Senate President *Pro Tempore*, House Minority Leader, Senate Minority Leader and President of the State Bar.

For more information about the Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission, interested individuals may call **Louise Baca-Sena**, Project Manager, at **(505) 827-4960**, email aoclmb@nmcourts.com or visit the Commission's website at www.nmjpec.org.

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