

Richardson outlines priorities in Iowa stop

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Mount Pleasant, Ia. — New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson spent about 90 minutes this morning in Mount Pleasant, outlining his top priorities should he be elected president in 2008.

Withdrawing American troops from Iraq, reducing greenhouse gases, creating a \$40,000 minimum wage for teachers, balancing the federal budget and overhauling health care were just a few of the projects Richardson said he would tackle.

"The election should be about who can bring change to the country," Richardson told about 80 people gathered in the John Wesley Holland Student Union at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant.

Richardson took more than a dozen questions on topics ranging from immigration to defense spending.

Richardson would like the United States to create a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants that involves them paying stiff fines, undergoing background checks and getting at the back of the line behind people who are trying to immigrate legally.

Richardson accepted a cookie from a group called Iowans for Sensible Priorities that advocates for reduced military spending. He said he supports some defense cuts, but wants to make sure troops have top-notch equipment. Richardson said he would make the process by which the government awards military contracts more competitive.

Richardson made the crowd laugh several times.

"Did we do the right thing in hiring your basketball coach?" he said, referring to the University of New Mexico hiring former University of Iowa coach Steve Alford.

"You can have him!" A man shouted from the back of the room.

Richardson is scheduled to make four other stops today in Keokuk, Fort Madison, Burlington and Wapello.