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**Archbishop John C. Wester's Statement on Proposed  
Reinstatement of Food Tax (Tortilla Tax)**

New Mexico ranks second highest in the nation for children living in hunger  
and the first highest for children living in poverty.

**Tuesday, December 20, 2016 10:00 A.M.**  
**The Catholic Center**  
**4000 St. Joseph's PI NW Albuquerque, NM 87120**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Tuesday, December 20, 2016— IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Pope Francis on Saturday touched millions of hearts in his message about the poor. “Why speak about the poor? Look to Christmas.” he said.

Pope Francis went on to say, “The fact that Christmas is almost upon us reminds us of the way in which God entered the world: born of the Virgin Mary and, like all children, wrapped in swaddling clothes, picked up, nursed. Not only He, but His mother and Joseph had to contend with the fact that there was no room for them at the Inn.”

The Holy Father continued: “The good news, the announcement of His birth, is not delivered to the king and princes, but to shepherds...this is our God. Not the wholly ‘other’, but totally the neighbor.”

My friends, our neighbors are hungry! At this time of preparation for Christmas, countless non-profits and civic organizations work to fill food baskets, but some legislators want to take food out of another basket – the grocery basket – with their proposed Food Tax.

We have recently seen in the media the discussion in legislative interim hearings of reinstating the food tax. This “Tortilla Tax”, as many have labeled it, only shifts the burden onto the poor and working families. What makes this idea even more obscene is that New Mexico ranks second highest in the nation for children living in hunger and the first highest for children living in poverty. Last year, 82% of births in New Mexico were Medicaid-eligible.

New Mexico has already been down this debate path before when we repealed the Food Tax in 2004. There was an attempt to pass the infamous Tortilla Tax in 2010 which was vetoed, and rightly so. I call on all New Mexicans to oppose the reinstatement of the Food Tax.

My friends, as we sit down for our holiday dinners, let us be mindful of our children and hungry neighbors. Say “NO” to taking food out of the grocery basket!--END