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Honest Work Trumps Lobbyist

Congratulations to Fred Nathan at Think New Mexico. He almost single-handedly spanked the state lottery commission by his exhaustive research and superior communication skills.

Think released a report at the end of 2006 which stated New Mexico's state lottery commission has held the contract to oversee the lottery since the lottery's inception in 1996. It's held it because it was the sole bidder.

GTech has been labeled as "baldly sleazy" and "perfected the backroom art of lottery politics," in a Fortune magazine article. The lottery commission gave GTech a five year contract in 2002. That's not illegal but surely unethical in that it eliminates any competition for five years and locks GTech's profits, a detriment to New Mexico taxpayers and especially possible scholarship recipients. GTech was also the lone bidder. Not much incentive there to keep your costs down.

Think won over the most important person to have a dog in this

fight. Gov. Bill Richardson Monday told the lottery commission to cancel the \$32,000 contract with its lobbyist. There's just no need to roll up your sleeves on this fight. Richardson wants more money to go to New Mexico students trying to attend college.

That's good news because state legislators are the second problem behind GTech. Now they know to keep their hands off this revenue stream. Every year legislators try to move more money from the lottery fund to public school capital spending and less to scholarships. Legislators can move less money from the general fund for capital funding and more to their pork. They never even attempt to collar GTech and its 19.6 percent piece of the pie. That's how lobbyists work.

The governor's a good guy in this fight. He should get his way and GTech should be just another bidder in November 2008 when the contract is due. At that time we'll get even more money freed up for college scholarships.