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HOUSE MEMORIAL 73

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

Patricia A. Lundstrom

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING AN INTERIM LEGISLATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF
REDUCING ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION LEVELS FOR DRIVERS UNDER TWENTY-
ONE YEARS OF AGE FROM TWO ONE-HUNDREDTHS TO ZERO.

WHEREAS, the drinking age in New Mexico is twenty-one, and
consumption of alcohol by anyone under age twenty-one is
illegal, except when consumed on private, non-alcohol premises
with the consent of a legal guardian or for religious purposes;
and

WHEREAS, underage drinking attracts many developing
adolescents and teens, putting them at risk of death from
alcohol-related car crashes, homicides and suicides; serious
injuries such as falls, burns and drowning; impaired judgment
leading to poor decisions; increased risk of physical and
sexual assault; and brain development problems; and

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1 WHEREAS, as reported in the *Journal of Substance Abuse*,
2 young people who begin drinking before age fifteen are four
3 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and
4 one-half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than
5 those who begin drinking at age twenty-one; and

6 WHEREAS, underage drinking is a widespread public health
7 problem in New Mexico; and

8 WHEREAS, according to a Pacific institute for research and
9 evaluation study, underage drinking cost the residents of New
10 Mexico seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000) in 2010,
11 representing medical care, work loss and pain and suffering;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, drivers under age twenty-one account for less
14 than ten percent of licensed drivers, but they account for more
15 than fifteen percent of the driving-under-the-influence-related
16 fatalities in New Mexico, according to New Mexico drunk driving
17 and underage driving statistics; and

18 WHEREAS, in many states, a zero-tolerance law applies to
19 underage drinking, making it illegal for people under the legal
20 age to drive with an alcohol concentration of anything but
21 zero; and

22 WHEREAS, a study of the first twelve states that
23 implemented zero-tolerance laws found that, compared with
24 twelve other states, those with the zero-tolerance laws
25 experienced a twenty percent relative decline in single-vehicle

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1 nighttime fatal crashes, which are those most likely to involve
2 alcohol among drivers under age twenty-one; and

3 WHEREAS, a public education campaign to raise awareness
4 about Maryland's zero-tolerance law was associated with a
5 forty-four percent decrease in the proportion of alcohol-
6 related crashes among underage drivers in counties exposed to
7 the campaign;

8 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
9 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the appropriate
10 interim legislative committee be requested to study the effects
11 of reducing alcohol concentration levels for drivers under
12 twenty-one years of age from two one-hundredths to zero; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
14 transmitted to the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative
15 council.