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HOUSE MEMORIAL 32

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE INDIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN TO STUDY AND DEVELOP A STATEWIDE PLAN OF
ACTION TO ADDRESS THE FORMER GOVERNMENT POLICY OF FORCED OR
COERCED STERILIZATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND OTHER WOMEN OF
COLOR IN NEW MEXICO AND TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A STATE TRUTH
AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION, A MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF FORCED
OR COERCED STERILIZATION AND STATE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE
INHUMANITY OF THE GRIEVOUS POLICY.

WHEREAS, between 1907 and 2018, Indigenous women and other
women of color across the United States, including in New
Mexico, were subjected to forced or coerced sterilizations
without their free, prior and informed consent, often through
the federal bureau of Indian affairs and its contracted health
care or the bureau's successor, the Indian health service and

1 its direct services and purchased-referred care, which includes
2 physicians and other health care providers, private practices,
3 clinics and institutions; and

4 WHEREAS, investigations in the 1970s revealed that between
5 twenty-five and fifty percent of Indigenous women of
6 childbearing age had been sterilized, with some of the highest
7 concentrations of procedures occurring in the Indian health
8 service regions of Albuquerque and the broader southwest; and

9 WHEREAS, federal and independent inquiries, including
10 those conducted by the United States government accountability
11 office in 1976 and Indigenous researchers, such as Dr. Connie
12 Pinkerman-Uri (Choctaw/Cherokee), have documented widespread
13 violations of medical ethics and human rights, including
14 sterilizations performed on girls and women under duress or
15 without being given full information about the sterilization
16 procedure and its consequences, or even without any permission
17 being sought; and

18 WHEREAS, these acts constitute grave violations of
19 fundamental human rights, including the rights to health,
20 bodily autonomy, family and freedom from torture or cruel,
21 inhuman or degrading treatment, as recognized under the
22 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the*
23 *Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*
24 adopted by the United Nations general assembly and the *Rome*
25 *Statute of the International Criminal Court*, which classifies

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1 forced sterilization as a crime against humanity; and

2 WHEREAS, the reproductive violence perpetrated against
3 Indigenous women through forced or coerced sterilization has
4 caused historical and generational trauma, demographic loss and
5 cultural devastation, harms that many legal scholars and human
6 rights experts argue rise to the level of genocide; and

7 WHEREAS, New Mexico, as a state with a majority-minority
8 population and a deep legacy of Indigenous leadership, bears a
9 moral and historical responsibility to confront this
10 unacknowledged chapter of United States and state history; and

11 WHEREAS, transitional justice frameworks, including truth
12 commissions established in Canada, South Africa and the state
13 of Maine, demonstrate that processes of truth-telling,
14 reparative justice and institutional reform can support healing
15 communities and restore public trust in government; and

16 WHEREAS, the establishment of a New Mexico memorial to the
17 victims of forced or coerced sterilization and the creation of
18 a truth and reconciliation commission would make New Mexico the
19 first state in the nation to formally investigate, acknowledge
20 and redress the full scope of these violations; and

21 WHEREAS, Indigenous women leaders, advocates and
22 survivors, alongside scholars and health practitioners, are
23 organizing to develop a Native American-led framework for
24 culturally grounded reproductive justice and trauma-informed
25 care to ensure such violations never occur again; and

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1 WHEREAS, in 2025, during the United Nations permanent
2 forum on the rights of Indigenous peoples, the American Indian
3 movement-west delegation met with Dr. Albert K. Barume, the
4 United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous
5 peoples, to raise the issue of forced sterilization of Native
6 American women and to call for a United Nations global study on
7 the scale and scope of these crimes; and

8 WHEREAS, Dr. Barume has since agreed to undertake a visit
9 to the United States, including a commitment to visit New
10 Mexico, to meet with communities and survivors, engage with
11 state and tribal officials and hold an international press
12 conference on this issue, thereby positioning New Mexico as a
13 focal point for global truth and healing;

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
15 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Indian
16 affairs department and the commission on the status of women be
17 requested to conduct a comprehensive study into the history,
18 scope and continuing impacts of forced and coerced
19 sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color in
20 New Mexico; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study:

22 A. identify all known and potential cases of forced
23 or coerced sterilization conducted within New Mexico through
24 United States Indian health service facilities and contracted
25 physicians and other hospitals and clinics;

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1 B. gather survivor testimony using trauma-informed
2 and culturally safe protocols, in partnership with Indigenous-
3 focused and Indigenous-community-led organizations;

4 C. assess the availability and accessibility of
5 reproductive health services for Indigenous women and other
6 women of color in New Mexico today; and

7 D. review and recommend educational, policy and
8 reparative measures to prevent future violations and promote
9 community healing; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department and the
11 commission be requested to seek the advice and assistance of
12 victims and family members of victims of forced or coerced
13 sterilization, historians, social and health services
14 practitioners and others knowledgeable about the treatment by
15 government employees and agents against Indigenous women and
16 other women of color and trauma-informed and culturally
17 sensitive protocols to be used when discussing such treatment
18 with victims and their families; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon completion of the study,
20 the department and commission be requested to present their
21 findings and recommendations to the governor and the
22 legislature no later than December 31, 2027, including
23 proposals for:

24 A. the establishment of a New Mexico truth and
25 reconciliation commission on the forced or coerced

1 sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color;

2 B. the creation of a statewide Native American-led
3 reproductive justice and reproductive sovereignty program
4 focused on culturally grounded health, education and healing
5 services;

6 C. the development of a public memorial and
7 educational curriculum to ensure enduring remembrance and
8 education of this history; and

9 D. the acknowledgment by the state of the
10 inhumanity of the grievous policy of forced or coerced
11 sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to the secretary of Indian affairs, the chair of
14 the commission on the status of women, the governor, tribal
15 governments in New Mexico, the interim legislative health and
16 human services committee and the interim legislative committee
17 dealing with Indian affairs.