

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

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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

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sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color;

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

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

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

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

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