

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE MERCURY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, mercury is a naturally occurring element that has many industrial and commercial uses; and

WHEREAS, human activities are primarily responsible for high mercury levels that frequently contaminate air and water; and

WHEREAS, unnaturally high levels of mercury in the environment pose a significant risk to health, the economy and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, mercury persists indefinitely in the environment and biomagnifies in the food chain; and

WHEREAS, at least twenty-six bodies of water in New Mexico have fish advisories due to mercury contamination; and

WHEREAS, mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can permanently damage the brain and nervous system, as well as harm the kidneys, liver, heart and reproductive system; and

WHEREAS, unborn and young children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of mercury; and

WHEREAS, the United States centers for disease control and prevention estimate that one in twelve women of childbearing age in the United States has an elevated level of

mercury in her body; and

WHEREAS, the national academy of sciences estimated that "over six hundred thousand children are born each year at risk for adverse neurodevelopmental effects due to in utero exposure to methyl mercury"; and

WHEREAS, the department of health and the department of environment estimate that over four thousand children born in New Mexico each year are at risk for neurologic deficits from in utero exposure to mercury; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States agency for toxic substances and disease registry, the primary ways people are exposed to mercury are through eating mercury-contaminated fish and from dental amalgams; and

WHEREAS, mercury has been targeted by the United States environmental protection agency and most state governments for being one of the most critical pollutants for elimination or reduction; and

WHEREAS, the quicksilver caucus was formed in May 2001 by a coalition of state environmental association leaders to collaboratively develop holistic approaches for reducing mercury in the environment, and caucus members include the association of state and territorial solid waste management officials; the association of state and territorial air pollution program administrators; the association of state and interstate water pollution control administrators; and the

association of state drinking water administrators; and

WHEREAS, in a 2005 survey, twenty-two states reported that they had a comprehensive mercury reduction action plan or a plan in development, including Colorado, Arizona and Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has no comprehensive mercury reduction action plan; and

WHEREAS, Article 20, Section 21 of the constitution of New Mexico affirms that "the protection of the state's beautiful and healthful environment is hereby declared to be of fundamental importance to the public interest, health, safety and the general welfare" and that "the legislature shall provide for control of pollution and control of despoilment of the air, water and other natural resources of this state, consistent with the use and development of these resources for the maximum benefit of the people";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health and the department of environment be requested to convene a task force to develop a comprehensive mercury reduction action plan to reduce harm from exposure to mercury in New Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include representation from appropriate state agencies; tribes; universities; and environmental, health and other

nongovernmental organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report its action plan to the legislative health and human services committee and to the interim legislative committee that studies water and natural resources issues at their October 2006 meetings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of health and the secretary of environment.