

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 46

48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2007

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO HELP  
RETAIN SMALL BUSINESSES IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND  
PRESERVE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF NATIVE AMERICAN AND HISPANIC  
COMMUNITIES BY URGING THAT CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES  
BE CONSIDERED BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN  
ADOPTING REGULATIONS FOR MEAT INSPECTION AND SLAUGHTERHOUSES.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is predominantly a rural state, with  
many very small communities surrounded by great areas of open  
vistas and great distances between communities; and

WHEREAS, due to the rural nature of the state, many people  
still raise livestock for personal consumption, but due to the  
changes faced by traditional communities, more and more Native  
American and Hispanic people rely on commercial ventures to  
provide them with traditional foods; and

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1           WHEREAS, at least ten percent of the population of New  
2 Mexico is Native American, many of whom remain living in  
3 traditional tribal or pueblo communities that were occupied by  
4 their ancestors as long ago as one thousand years; and

5           WHEREAS, close to fifty percent of the population of New  
6 Mexico is of Spanish ancestry, and many of these people live in  
7 the small traditional communities settled by their ancestors  
8 over the last five hundred years; and

9           WHEREAS, this large segment of the population of New  
10 Mexico has traditions that must be preserved if the heritage,  
11 culture and spiritual practices of the long-term residents of  
12 New Mexico are to remain vibrant and meaningful into the  
13 future; and

14           WHEREAS, food and food preparation are basic to  
15 maintaining many belief systems and the traditional practices  
16 of both the Hispanic population and the Native American  
17 population of New Mexico and include rich and important  
18 practices involving the raising, blessing, harvesting and  
19 consumption of animals; and

20           WHEREAS, slaughtering of animals has for centuries been a  
21 community activity that in the last hundred years has become  
22 the job of a community member who knows the culturally  
23 appropriate way to raise and prepare animals for ceremonial or  
24 community use; and

25           WHEREAS, the proprietors of these community businesses

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1 carry much of the traditional knowledge of the appropriate way  
2 and the respectful attitude required to harvest animals for  
3 cultural and traditional activities such as feasts, ceremonies,  
4 matanzas and other community gatherings, and the practices are  
5 viewed many times by regulators as conflicting with health and  
6 safety standards for slaughtering of animals; and

7 WHEREAS, the United States department of agriculture has  
8 specifically authorized spiritual leaders of religious  
9 traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam or Judaism in  
10 regard to the preparation of kosher products to be present as  
11 necessary during the butchering of animals, but spiritual  
12 practices of Native Americans and traditional practices of  
13 Hispanic communities are not recognized in these religious  
14 tradition exemptions, in large part because the need for the  
15 services of a slaughterhouse outside of the community or under  
16 state or federal regulation is a recent phenomenon; and

17 WHEREAS, in recent years, United States department of  
18 agriculture regulations governing the slaughter of animals have  
19 become sophisticated and removed from the traditional values  
20 and practices that support the cultures of New Mexico, tending  
21 to hold those values and practices in disdain as fewer people  
22 creating and enforcing regulations actually have knowledge or  
23 understanding of these cultural values and practices; and

24 WHEREAS, small slaughterhouses or community butchers have  
25 found it difficult to remain in business due to the lack of

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1 understanding expressed and exhibited by regulators and their  
2 regulations, and traditional communities are prohibited from  
3 obtaining animals in the way the animals are required to be  
4 prepared by tradition, due to the regulations; and

5 WHEREAS, even more stringent regulations prohibit  
6 preparation of slaughtered animals in traditional ways for  
7 resale, as in allowing restaurants to serve some traditional  
8 foods; however, in some cases, parts of animals unavailable,  
9 due to regulation, from local slaughtering businesses are  
10 available as imported delicacies; and

11 WHEREAS, small butchers and slaughterhouses are  
12 disappearing from traditional communities in many cases due to  
13 the expense of implementing regulations and the regulators'  
14 expectations that to remain in business a butcher will purchase  
15 sophisticated equipment and maintain detailed records that  
16 require sophisticated information technology; and

17 WHEREAS, some of the requirements that exceed a small  
18 butcher's or slaughterhouse operator's capacity to implement  
19 are targeted at large meatpacking operations that obtain their  
20 animals from feedlots; and

21 WHEREAS, representatives of traditional communities are  
22 willing to work with the United States department of  
23 agriculture to develop regulations that will allow those  
24 communities to continue their traditions, ceremonies and age-  
25 old community practices while satisfying those necessary health

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1 and safety concerns of the regulators, and allowing small  
2 butchering and slaughterhouse businesses to prosper and serve a  
3 great need in these traditional communities;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
5 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico congressional  
6 delegation be urged to take action to help protect small  
7 businesses in New Mexico by helping the proprietors of small  
8 slaughterhouses and butchering operations that provide meat and  
9 slaughtered animals for consumption for traditional Native  
10 American feasts and ceremonies, Hispanic community matanzas and  
11 other traditional community gatherings and celebrations to  
12 obtain relief from oppressive regulation through negotiation  
13 with regulators of the United States department of agriculture  
14 and implementation of regulations that take into consideration  
15 the interests and needs of traditional people and communities;  
16 and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico congressional  
18 delegation consider requiring the United States department of  
19 agriculture to adopt provisions in regulations that allow  
20 Native American spiritual leaders the same liberty as other  
21 religious leaders to participate in butchering of animals in  
22 specified slaughterhouse operations to ensure that animals for  
23 feasts, ceremonies or other community gatherings are prepared  
24 as required by tradition; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States department

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1 of agriculture be encouraged to engage in dialogue with the  
2 leaders of traditional communities, both Native American and  
3 Hispanic, in New Mexico to reach accord on regulatory issues of  
4 concern to the traditional and spiritual leaders of those  
5 communities and also to aid small community butchering and  
6 slaughterhouse operations to remain as viable businesses and  
7 provide the needed services that they offer in small  
8 traditional communities; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
10 transmitted to the New Mexico congressional delegation, the  
11 president of the Navajo Nation, the president of the Jicarilla  
12 Apache Nation, the president of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the  
13 chair of the all Indian pueblo council, the United States  
14 department of agriculture and the New Mexico livestock board.

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