

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 47

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

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO LIVESTOCK BOARD TO HELP RETAIN SMALL
BUSINESSES IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND PRESERVE
TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF NATIVE AMERICAN AND HISPANIC
COMMUNITIES BY TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION CULTURAL AND
TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN ADOPTING REGULATIONS FOR MEAT
INSPECTION AND SLAUGHTERHOUSES.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has a diverse and culturally rich
population, and in New Mexico, regulators and regulatory
systems have the unique duty to be aware of the cultural
practices of the communities that are under their regulatory
control; and

WHEREAS, regulation of livestock and meat inspection is
the duty of the New Mexico livestock board; and

WHEREAS, many livestock and meat inspection regulators

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1 have no knowledge of or hold in disdain the traditional
2 practices that help to maintain the continuity and cohesiveness
3 of Native American and Hispanic traditional communities in the
4 state; and

5 WHEREAS, many people in traditional or rural communities
6 still raise livestock for personal consumption, but due to the
7 changes faced by traditional communities, more and more Native
8 American and Hispanic people rely on commercial ventures to
9 provide them with traditional foods; and

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

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

21 WHEREAS, slaughtering of animals has for centuries been a
22 community activity that in the last hundred years changed to a
23 job of a community member who knew the culturally appropriate
24 way to raise and prepare animals for ceremonial or community
25 use, and now in many cases falls to a butcher or slaughterhouse

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1 operator; and

2 WHEREAS, very few of these community businesses remain to
3 carry on the traditional knowledge of the appropriate way and
4 the respectful attitude required to harvest animals for
5 cultural and traditional activities such as feasts, ceremonies,
6 matanzas and other community gatherings; and

7 WHEREAS, the practices are viewed many times by regulators
8 as conflicting with health and safety standards for the
9 slaughtering and releasing of prepared animals to owners for
10 personal consumption; and

11 WHEREAS, the New Mexico livestock board must follow the
12 regulations of the United States department of agriculture, and
13 these regulations many times appear to conflict with the
14 traditions of meat preparation that are basic beliefs of Native
15 American and Hispanic traditionalists; and

16 WHEREAS, regulators from the New Mexico livestock board
17 have some latitude in interpreting regulations and in some
18 cases may interpret the regulations more stringently than
19 necessary, while in other cases appear to fall below the
20 standards expected of them by the United States department of
21 agriculture; and

22 WHEREAS, Native Americans and Hispanic communities are
23 interested in cooperating with and negotiating an understanding
24 with the New Mexico livestock board to help small custom
25 slaughterhouses or butchers remain in business, providing a

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1 much-needed service to people who raise their own livestock and
2 need to have the animals processed in a culturally appropriate
3 and traditional manner; and

4 WHEREAS, as regulations governing the slaughter of animals
5 have become more and more sophisticated and farther removed
6 from the traditional values and practices that support the
7 cultures of New Mexico, it is clear that lack of communication
8 about and respect for values that are not shared makes
9 regulation difficult, and many times makes the continued
10 existence of these small businesses questionable; 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, requirements that exceed a small butcher's or
18 slaughterhouse operator's capacity to implement many times are
19 actually targeted at large meatpacking operations that obtain
20 their animals from feedlots, and these requirements are not
21 necessarily required to protect the health of the public when a
22 slaughterhouse operation is small; and

23 WHEREAS, Native American spiritual leaders and those in
24 the community who harvest and prepare animals for consumption
25 for traditional purposes are interested in beginning a dialogue

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1 with the New Mexico livestock board to discover common ground
2 that will allow traditions, ceremonies and age-old community
3 practices to continue, while satisfying those necessary health
4 and safety concerns of the regulators and allowing small
5 butchering and slaughterhouse businesses to prosper and serve a
6 great need in these traditional communities;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
8 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico livestock board be
9 urged to begin a dialogue with leaders of traditional Native
10 American and Hispanic communities to discuss the potential for
11 working together to develop better communication and to provide
12 better understanding of the needs of both the traditional
13 community leaders and the regulators pertaining to the
14 butchering or slaughter of animals in traditional ways for
15 feasts, ceremonies and community gatherings; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico livestock board
17 and the proprietors of small slaughterhouses and butchering
18 operations that provide meat and slaughtered animals for
19 consumption for traditional Native American feasts and
20 ceremonies, Hispanic community matanzas and other traditional
21 community gatherings and celebrations work together to sustain
22 these small businesses to promote the traditions and cultures
23 of New Mexico; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico livestock board
25 work with Native American traditional spiritual leaders and

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1 proprietors of operations that butcher or slaughter animals for
2 consumption at feasts, ceremonies, Hispanic community matanzas
3 and other traditional gatherings to address regulatory
4 restrictions of the United States department of agriculture
5 that are impeding the operation of these small businesses and
6 slowly destroying the underlying traditions of the cultures of
7 New Mexico; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico livestock board
9 report on its progress in developing better communication and
10 establishing an ongoing dialogue to the appropriate legislative
11 interim committee no later than September 1, 2007; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to the governor, the president of the Navajo
14 Nation, the president of the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the
15 president of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the chair of the all
16 Indian pueblos council and the New Mexico livestock board.

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