

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 49

2 **49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2010**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 HONORING THE MEMORY OF SANDRA SANCHEZ AND ALL MISSING PERSONS
12 AND VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF
13 PUBLIC SAFETY TO STUDY AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE
14 REPORTING, COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION BY AND AMONG LAW
15 ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES; REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT TO CONSIDER
16 APPROPRIATE SANCTIONS FOR AGENCIES THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE
17 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE MISSING PERSONS
18 INFORMATION ACT.

19
20 WHEREAS, when Sandra Sanchez went missing, the local law
21 enforcement agency, despite knowing that Sandra had been a
22 victim of domestic violence for five years and that she had an
23 order of protection in place, did not start investigating her
24 disappearance until two weeks after her family reported her
25 missing and did not begin searching for Sandra until her family

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1 notified the media, three weeks after she went missing; and

2 WHEREAS, two months after Sandra went missing, she was
3 found shot dead in a culvert in Socorro county; and

4 WHEREAS, in 2009, newspapers reported that twenty-five
5 victims of domestic violence died at the hands of their abusers
6 in New Mexico, and in 2008, thirty-four domestic violence
7 victims were reported to have been killed by their abusers; and

8 WHEREAS, in many cases, children were present when the
9 victim was killed; and

10 WHEREAS, according to the national Latino alliance for the
11 elimination of domestic violence, law enforcement agencies in
12 New Mexico fail to respond to approximately thirty percent of
13 the incidents of domestic violence reported to them; and

14 WHEREAS, cases like Sandra Sanchez's occur on a regular
15 basis, yet when it comes to reports of domestic violence, law
16 enforcement agencies do not respond as quickly or as diligently
17 as they do to reports of other types of crime; and

18 WHEREAS, studies have shown that police departments do not
19 treat domestic violence as seriously as other crimes, despite
20 police department policies relating to domestic violence; and

21 WHEREAS, the remains of eleven women were found buried
22 nude in a mass grave on Albuquerque's West Mesa in February
23 2009; and

24 WHEREAS, the West Mesa victims are estimated to have been
25 buried between 2001 and 2005 and were reported missing prior to

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1 that time; and

2 WHEREAS, upon receiving a missing person report, local law
3 enforcement agencies are required to immediately conduct an
4 investigation and to provide to the department of public
5 safety's clearinghouse all information relating to the missing
6 person; and

7 WHEREAS, the discovery of the West Mesa bodies and cases
8 like Sandra Sanchez's have raised public awareness about the
9 lack of effective investigation by law enforcement agencies of
10 missing person reports and of incidents of domestic violence
11 and about the relationship between domestic violence and
12 missing persons; and

13 WHEREAS, there is public concern about an apparent lack of
14 communication and coordination among local law enforcement
15 agencies and the department of public safety regarding reports
16 of missing persons and incidents of domestic violence; and

17 WHEREAS, there is also concern about inadequate follow-
18 through on investigations and about whether law enforcement's
19 response is immediate and timely; and

20 WHEREAS, improved law enforcement response to reports of
21 missing persons and incidents of domestic violence is necessary
22 to ensure public safety and security in New Mexico;

23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
24 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in honor of the memory of Sandra
25 Sanchez and all missing persons and victims of domestic

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1 violence, the department of public safety be requested to
2 assemble and convene a task force to study and identify
3 opportunities to increase reporting, communication and
4 coordination by and among law enforcement agencies and to
5 identify barriers to timely and effective investigations of
6 reports of missing persons and incidents of domestic violence;
7 and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include the
9 director of the New Mexico law enforcement academy;
10 representatives from the department of public safety, the New
11 Mexico association of counties, the New Mexico municipal
12 league, local law enforcement agencies, the New Mexico
13 sheriffs' and police association, the New Mexico coalition
14 against domestic violence, the national Latino alliance for the
15 elimination of domestic violence and the New Mexico coalition
16 for sexual assault programs; and other interested and
17 appropriate persons; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force also address
19 the extent to which local law enforcement agencies are
20 complying with Section 29-15-7 NMSA 1978 of the Missing Persons
21 Information Act and identify and recommend appropriate
22 sanctions for those agencies that do not comply; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of public
24 safety report the findings and recommendations of the task
25 force to the appropriate interim legislative committee no later

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1 than November 2010; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
3 transmitted to the secretary of public safety, the director of
4 the New Mexico law enforcement academy, the New Mexico
5 association of counties, the New Mexico municipal league, the
6 New Mexico sheriffs' and police association, the New Mexico
7 coalition against domestic violence, the national Latino
8 alliance for the elimination of domestic violence and the New
9 Mexico coalition for sexual assault programs.

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