

1 A MEMORIAL

2 HONORING PAULA TACKETT, DESPITE HER PROTESTATIONS, BECAUSE
3 SHE KNOWS BETTER THAN TO THINK THE LEGISLATURE WOULD ALLOW
4 HER TO RETIRE DURING THE INTERIM AND GO QUIETLY INTO THE
5 NIGHT WITHOUT DUE RECOGNITION FROM THE BODY SHE SERVED SO
6 WELL FOR SO LONG.

7
8 WHEREAS, Paula Tackett retired from the legislative
9 council service in June 2010 after nearly twenty-three years
10 as director or, as she sometimes referred to her multifaceted
11 job, the legislature's "head janitor"; and

12 WHEREAS, though her predecessor, Clay Buchanan, was a
13 hard act to follow, Paula went on to leave as indelible a
14 mark on the council service as he did, and the occasional
15 staff comment she heard in her early days, "When CLAY was in
16 charge..." has now become "When PAULA was in charge..."; and

17 WHEREAS, Paula's path to a career with the legislature
18 and the law may have begun with her job at the Wharf
19 restaurant in Virginia during the Watergate hearings when,
20 after waiting on such notables as John Dean and Fred
21 Fielding, she decided, "If either of those guys can be a
22 lawyer, I can be a lawyer."; and

23 WHEREAS, after earning her law degree from the
24 university of New Mexico, Paula clerked at the New Mexico
25 court of appeals and supreme court and worked at the law firm

1 of White, Koch, Kelly and McCarthy, where she distinguished
2 herself not only as the first female attorney at the firm,
3 but also as the firm's only attorney to accept a bundle of
4 rainbow trout as payment for legal services; and

5 WHEREAS, Paula moved from private-sector attorney to
6 public-sector attorney when she joined the council service in
7 1982, and within six years, she went from a somewhat regular
8 job of bill drafter in the back to the sometimes daunting job
9 of director out front; and

10 WHEREAS, if Paula's presence seemed to her staff like
11 sharing an office with a whirlwind, it was partly due to her
12 vivacious personality, but it was also due to the demands of
13 the job, which ranged from administering the drafting, legal
14 and research agency of the legislature to serving on numerous
15 boards and commissions and overseeing the capitol facilities
16 and grounds; and

17 WHEREAS, though these statutory duties were a full-time
18 job by themselves, Paula also set aside time to serve on
19 committees and task forces that dealt with her pet topics of
20 capital outlay, education and art; and

21 WHEREAS, Paula was a driving force behind the
22 establishment of the capitol art foundation and the permanent
23 art collection that now draws thousands of visitors to the
24 capitol each year, even in a city saturated with art venues;
25 and

1 WHEREAS, Paula managed – and lived through – two major
2 renovations of the capitol, during which time her usual
3 sartorial flair was augmented even further by a hard hat
4 that, by some accounts, she never once took off; and

5 WHEREAS, Paula also lived through the design and
6 construction of the capitol parking facility and three office
7 moves as the council service bounced from the third floor of
8 the roundhouse to temporary quarters across the street, back
9 to the third floor again and, finally, up to the fourth
10 floor; and

11 WHEREAS, despite her inclinations to the contrary, Paula
12 helped the legislature transition out of the
13 typewriter-and-mimeograph age into the computer age with the
14 development of the integrated information system that now
15 serves all legislative entities; and

16 WHEREAS, Paula's *tour de force* may have been her
17 involvement with the annual capital outlay legislation, which
18 ballooned from a manageable bill of a few hundred projects in
19 her early years as director to a massive bill containing
20 thousands of projects in her final years, and she topped off
21 her career by pulling all-nighters to serve as an expert
22 witness on a capital outlay void bill that, at times, stumped
23 attorneys in three agencies; and

24 WHEREAS, Paula, a self-described "political process
25 junkie", was perfectly at home in the push, pull and swirl of

1 politics; her tenure spanned several leadership changes in
2 the house and senate as well as changes in the governor's
3 office, and she worked with, outlasted and, if the occasion
4 warranted, gently took the shine off hundreds of legislators
5 and legislative staff members over the years; and

6 WHEREAS, despite whatever crisis may have been consuming
7 the legislature, Paula kept her staff close to her heart;
8 while she could not always protect them from grueling work
9 schedules or last-minute demands from downstairs, she would
10 soften the blows by personally delivering flowers
11 office-to-office, hosting home-cooked dinners for bleary-eyed
12 staff and, when she thought no one was looking, scraping
13 snow-covered windshields in the staff parking lot at
14 midnight; and

15 WHEREAS, many in the roundhouse knew for years that
16 Paula could retire but, somehow, thought she never would, as
17 the idea of Paula without the legislature, or the legislature
18 without Paula, seemed unthinkable; and

19 WHEREAS, Paula's soft heart, as well as her energy,
20 smile, laughter, sense of humor, institutional memory,
21 ability to cry at the drop of a hat and downright amazing
22 ability to sense the presence of chocolate in a room no
23 matter how well it was hidden, will be missed by all who have
24 worked with her and learned from her;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE

1 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that Paula Tackett be honored for her
2 unparalleled commitment not only to the legislature as an
3 institution but also to the hundreds of individual
4 legislators who came to Santa Fe to serve their districts
5 during her time at the council service; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
7 given to Paula with warmest wishes for a retirement that makes
8 up for all the unused annual leave that accumulated while she
9 was making the legislature accessible to all and maintaining
10 the roundhouse's reputation as, truly, the "people's
11 house".

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