

1 A MEMORIAL

2 HONORING JONELLE MAISON ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE  
3 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE AND THANKING HER FOR HER MANY  
4 YEARS OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE LEGISLATURE.  
5

6 WHEREAS, Jonelle Maison – bill drafter extraordinaire,  
7 author of massive and complicated bills, stalwart defender of  
8 the state's constitution and, most important, keeper of the  
9 M and Ms – retired from the legislative council service on  
10 December 31, 2010; and

11 WHEREAS, never one to let a technicality stop her from  
12 doing what she loves, Jonelle stayed beyond her retirement  
13 date to work as a contract drafter for the 2011 session  
14 because her time working with what she calls "the first"  
15 among the three branches of government has been exceptionally  
16 swell; and

17 WHEREAS, Jonelle started her career at the roundhouse  
18 working as a temporary proofreader, and when permanent work  
19 as a receptionist was offered, she took it even though she  
20 hated answering telephones and, one can only surmise, had a  
21 difficult time hiding that fact from the callers; and

22 WHEREAS, a vacancy in the proofing department rescued  
23 her from the tyranny of ringing telephones, and after quickly  
24 rising to the position of editor and immersing herself in the  
25 language and structure of New Mexico law, she was promoted to

1 bill drafter; and

2 WHEREAS, Jonelle moved her body, if not her soul, down  
3 the street to work for the administrative office of the  
4 courts as a management analyst, but when she found herself  
5 unable to figure out just what a management analyst was  
6 supposed to do, she "came home" to work as a contractor with  
7 the house appropriations and finance committee and the  
8 legislative finance committee and, later, as a permanent  
9 employee of the council service; and

10 WHEREAS, Jonelle is one of a rare breed – a bill drafter  
11 who is not an attorney and who learned the intricacies of the  
12 law not in a lecture hall but in the roundhouse trenches,  
13 over the course of three decades and more sessions than  
14 anyone else on the fourth floor has survived, with the  
15 possible exception of Saint Stella in the governor's office;  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, her lack of a law school imprimatur never got  
18 in her way; she eventually became a senior drafter and  
19 trained, critiqued, mentored, outlasted and out-drafted  
20 dozens of staff attorneys who passed through the council  
21 service during her tenure; and

22 WHEREAS, if learning about New Mexico state government  
23 and law from Jonelle could, at times, be akin to drinking  
24 water from a firehose, she could hardly be faulted for her  
25 enthusiasm for the topic and her encyclopedic memory of not

1 only the state's contemporary laws but also its more  
2 entertaining historical oddities; and

3 WHEREAS, Jonelle's specialty became the dreaded big  
4 bills, whether they were reorganizing state government,  
5 performing major surgery on the Public School Code or merging  
6 the public utility commission with the corporation  
7 commission, and though it was clear she loved the challenge  
8 and would have it no other way, she could sometimes be heard  
9 moaning, "Oh, Lord, just shoot me now"; and

10 WHEREAS, Jonelle was always willing to go to the mat  
11 over constitutional issues, and many legislators, green and  
12 not-so-green, were treated to her exclamation, "But your bill  
13 violates the constitution!" and to her signature body  
14 language that so clearly said, "Anyone who even THINKS about  
15 violating the antidonation clause can meet me outside ... ";  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, lioness though she may have been over some  
18 matters, Jonelle was actually the office softie – when it  
19 came to baby showers, retirement parties and all-around  
20 festive events, she was the first to sign up to deck the  
21 halls, and many visitors under the age of five gravitated to  
22 her office to boogie with her dancing flower pot or sprawl on  
23 the floor with toys; and

24 WHEREAS, though she has spent decades immersed in the  
25 dry verbiage of legislative drafting, Jonelle's native tongue

1 is the colorful turn of phrase – she often told proofreaders  
2 "please don't maunder over my bill", and she would describe  
3 the pedigree of certain laws by saying that they had been on  
4 the books "since God was a goose" – and while some of her  
5 most colorful turns of phrase cannot be read out loud in the  
6 senate chamber, she will always be fondly remembered in the  
7 back halls of the council service for her frequent emphatic  
8 references to ducks; and

9 WHEREAS, the back halls and front halls alike will be  
10 lesser places without Jonelle's laughter, gusto and flair, as  
11 well as her fierce dedication to the legislature and to the  
12 career that she claims she just "fell into";

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE  
14 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that deep appreciation be extended to  
15 Jonelle Maison for her many years of service to the  
16 legislature as a drafter, teacher, committee staffer,  
17 analyst, liaison, mentor, proofreader, editor, capital outlay  
18 "honcha", challenged receptionist and, most of all, loyal  
19 friend of the institution, even when faced with tempting work  
20 offers elsewhere, such as on Jerry King's ranch; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be  
22 given to Jonelle before she leaves town to go off gallivanting  
23 on her next trip abroad, with warmest wishes for a retirement  
24 that is nothing short of coolarama. \_\_\_\_\_