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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 10

50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2011

INTRODUCED BY

Mimi Stewart

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND FISH AND NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE WORK TOGETHER USING EXISTING RESOURCES TO CREATE A PILOT TRAFFIC SAFETY PROJECT IN AN ACCIDENT-PRONE AREA OF THE STATE TO SAVE LIVES BY REDUCING COLLISIONS BETWEEN LARGE ANIMALS AND VEHICLES.

WHEREAS, vehicle collisions with large animals such as elk, deer, bears, mountain lions and cattle kill or injure both humans and animals every year; and

WHEREAS, research shows that having drivers reduce their speed on specific sections of roads where more crashes happen lowers the number of accidents; and

WHEREAS, young drivers between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are more likely to be involved in a car accident with a large animal than any other age group of drivers because

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1 they are learning how to drive and often are distracted by
2 texting, cell phones and other technology; and

3 WHEREAS, an estimated seven hundred twenty-five thousand
4 to one million five hundred thousand animal-vehicle collisions
5 occur in the United States every year, resulting in over two
6 hundred human deaths and twenty-nine thousand human injuries;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, according to a report to congress of national
9 trends by the federal highway administration, during the period
10 between 1990 and 2004, the number of animal-vehicle collisions
11 increased by about fifty percent while the total number of
12 accidents remained about the same; and

13 WHEREAS, animal-vehicle collisions result in increased
14 costs for dealing with injured or killed humans and animals,
15 cleaning up roads, repairing damaged vehicles and higher
16 automobile insurance rates; and

17 WHEREAS, reducing vehicle speeds in a busy wildlife
18 crossing zone can allow drivers time to compensate for the
19 increased probability of being involved in an accident; and

20 WHEREAS, it takes two hundred ten feet for a car traveling
21 at thirty-five miles per hour to stop, four hundred three feet
22 at fifty-five miles per hour and six hundred fifty feet at
23 seventy-five miles per hour, thereby demonstrating that the
24 slower someone drives the greater the chance of stopping prior
25 to hitting an animal; and

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1 WHEREAS, there are more than four million miles of roads
2 in the United States and two hundred six thousand miles of
3 roads in New Mexico, which is too many miles to fence to keep
4 animals off the roads; and

5 WHEREAS, according to research by the Los Alamos national
6 laboratory, the number of animal-vehicle collisions is greatest
7 between four o'clock a.m. and eight o'clock a.m. and between
8 four o'clock p.m. and eight o'clock p.m.; and

9 WHEREAS, a study by the institute of transportation
10 engineers found that sixty-nine to eighty-five percent of
11 animal-vehicle collisions in the United States are at night;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, during the fall, animals are on the move, and it
14 is especially important to drive slower during this time; and

15 WHEREAS, New Mexicans need to take responsibility not to
16 litter and to pick up trash because littering attracts animals
17 out into the open, making them vulnerable to accidents; and

18 WHEREAS, in 2009, Colorado passed the nation's first
19 wildlife speed zone law requiring that drivers slow down in
20 designated wildlife crossing zones to protect citizens and
21 wildlife; and

22 WHEREAS, Colorado is using fines collected from speeders
23 in wildlife crossing zones to reduce the costs of implementing
24 that program; and

25 WHEREAS, if New Mexico could save one life or prevent one

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1 serious injury, then this pilot project will be worth the
2 effort;

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
4 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of transportation,
5 department of game and fish and the New Mexico state police be
6 requested to work together, using existing resources such as
7 signs and lights, to create a pilot traffic safety project in
8 an accident-prone area of the state to increase the safety of
9 New Mexico's residents by reducing large animal-vehicle
10 collisions; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in designing the project, the
12 participating state agencies consider reducing the speed limit
13 and doubling the fines for speeding in the wildlife crossing
14 zone; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of
16 transportation, the department of game and fish and the New
17 Mexico state police be requested to send a joint report on the
18 pilot project and their recommendations to the appropriate
19 interim committee by June 30, 2012; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all appropriate state agencies
21 be requested to include information for drivers about how to
22 avoid animal-vehicle collisions on their web sites and in their
23 brochures if appropriate and when resources allow; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the governor be requested to
25 issue a proclamation declaring a day to promote slowing down

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1 for the safety of drivers and wildlife; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
3 transmitted to the governor, the commissioner of public lands,
4 the department of game and fish, the state parks division of
5 the energy, minerals and natural resources department, the
6 department of transportation and the New Mexico state police.

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