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HOUSE MEMORIAL 58

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

INTRODUCED BY

Mimi Stewart

A MEMORIAL

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Jonelle started her career at the roundhouse

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1 working as a temporary proofreader, and when permanent work as
2 a receptionist was offered, she took it even though she hated
3 answering telephones and, one can only surmise, had a difficult
4 time hiding that fact from the callers; and

5 WHEREAS, a vacancy in the proofing department rescued her
6 from the tyranny of ringing telephones, and after quickly
7 rising to the position of editor and immersing herself in the
8 language and structure of New Mexico law, she was promoted to
9 bill drafter; and

10 WHEREAS, Jonelle moved her body, if not her soul, down the
11 street to work for the administrative office of the courts as a
12 management analyst, but when she found herself unable to figure
13 out just what a management analyst was supposed to do, she
14 "came home" to work as a contractor with the house
15 appropriations and finance committee and the legislative
16 finance committee and, later, as a permanent employee of the
17 council service; and

18 WHEREAS, Jonelle is one of a rare breed – a bill drafter
19 who is not an attorney and who learned the intricacies of the
20 law not in a lecture hall but in the roundhouse trenches, over
21 the course of three decades and more sessions than anyone else
22 on the fourth floor has survived, with the possible exception
23 of Saint Stella in the governor's office; and

24 WHEREAS, her lack of a law school imprimatur never got in
25 her way; she eventually became a senior drafter and trained,

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1 critiqued, mentored, outlasted and out-drafted dozens of staff
2 attorneys who passed through the council service during her
3 tenure; and

4 WHEREAS, if learning about New Mexico state government and
5 law from Jonelle could, at times, be akin to drinking water
6 from a firehose, she could hardly be faulted for her enthusiasm
7 for the topic and her encyclopedic memory of not only the
8 state's contemporary laws but also its more entertaining
9 historical oddities; and

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

17 WHEREAS, Jonelle was always willing to go to the mat over
18 constitutional issues, and many legislators, green and not-so-
19 green, were treated to her exclamation, "But your bill violates
20 the constitution!" and to her signature body language that so
21 clearly said, "Anyone who even THINKS about violating the
22 antidonation clause can meet me outside ... "; and

23 WHEREAS, lioness though she may have been over some
24 matters, Jonelle was actually the office softie – when it came
25 to baby showers, retirement parties and all-around festive

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1 events, she was the first to sign up to deck the halls, and
2 many visitors under the age of five gravitated to her office to
3 boogie with her dancing flower pot or sprawl on the floor with
4 toys; and

5 WHEREAS, though she has spent decades immersed in the dry
6 verbiage of legislative drafting, Jonelle's native tongue is
7 the colorful turn of phrase – she often told proofreaders
8 "please don't maunder over my bill", and she would describe the
9 pedigree of certain laws by saying that they had been on the
10 books "since God was a goose" – and while some of her most
11 colorful turns of phrase cannot be read out loud in the house
12 chamber, she will always be fondly remembered in the back halls
13 of the council service for her frequent emphatic references to
14 ducks; and

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

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
20 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that deep
21 appreciation be extended to Jonelle Maison for her many years
22 of service to the legislature as a drafter, teacher, committee
23 staffer, analyst, liaison, mentor, proofreader, editor, capital
24 outlay "honcha", challenged receptionist and, most of all,
25 loyal friend of the institution, even when faced with tempting

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work offers elsewhere, such as on Jerry King's ranch; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
given to Jonelle before she leaves town to go off gallivanting
on her next trip abroad, with warmest wishes for a retirement
that is nothing short of coolarama.