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SENATE MEMORIAL 73

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

INTRODUCED BY

Timothy Z. Jennings

A MEMORIAL

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Paula's path to a career with the legislature and

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1 the law may have begun with her job at the Wharf restaurant in  
2 Virginia during the Watergate hearings when, after waiting on  
3 such notables as John Dean and Fred Fielding, she decided, "If  
4 either of those guys can be a lawyer, I can be a lawyer."; and

5 WHEREAS, after earning her law degree from the university  
6 of New Mexico, Paula clerked at the New Mexico court of appeals  
7 and supreme court and worked at the law firm of White, Koch,  
8 Kelly and McCarthy, where she distinguished herself not only as  
9 the first female attorney at the firm, but also as the firm's  
10 only attorney to accept a bundle of rainbow trout as payment  
11 for legal services; and

12 WHEREAS, Paula moved from private-sector attorney to  
13 public-sector attorney when she joined the council service in  
14 1982, and within six years, she went from a somewhat regular  
15 job of bill drafter in the back to the sometimes daunting job  
16 of director out front; and

17 WHEREAS, if Paula's presence seemed to her staff like  
18 sharing an office with a whirlwind, it was partly due to her  
19 vivacious personality, but it was also due to the demands of  
20 the job, which ranged from administering the drafting, legal  
21 and research agency of the legislature to serving on numerous  
22 boards and commissions and overseeing the capitol facilities  
23 and grounds; and

24 WHEREAS, though these statutory duties were a full-time  
25 job by themselves, Paula also set aside time to serve on

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1 committees and task forces that dealt with her pet topics of  
2 capital outlay, education and art; and

3 WHEREAS, Paula was a driving force behind the  
4 establishment of the capitol art foundation and the permanent  
5 art collection that now draws thousands of visitors to the  
6 capitol each year, even in a city saturated with art venues;  
7 and

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

12 WHEREAS, Paula also lived through the design and  
13 construction of the capitol parking facility and three office  
14 moves as the council service bounced from the third floor of  
15 the roundhouse to temporary quarters across the street, back to  
16 the third floor again and, finally, up to the fourth floor; and

17 WHEREAS, despite her inclinations to the contrary, Paula  
18 helped the legislature transition out of the typewriter-and-  
19 mimeograph age into the computer age with the development of  
20 the integrated information system that now serves all  
21 legislative entities; and

22 WHEREAS, Paula's *tour de force* may have been her  
23 involvement with the annual capital outlay legislation, which  
24 ballooned from a manageable bill of a few hundred projects in  
25 her early years as director to a massive bill containing

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1 thousands of projects in her final years, and she topped off  
2 her career by pulling all-nighters to serve as an expert  
3 witness on a capital outlay void bill that, at times, stumped  
4 attorneys in three agencies; and

5 WHEREAS, Paula, a self-described "political process  
6 junkie", was perfectly at home in the push, pull and swirl of  
7 politics; her tenure spanned several leadership changes in the  
8 house and senate as well as changes in the governor's office,  
9 and she worked with, outlasted and, if the occasion warranted,  
10 gently took the shine off hundreds of legislators and  
11 legislative staff members over the years; and

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

20 WHEREAS, many in the roundhouse knew for years that Paula  
21 could retire but, somehow, thought she never would, as the idea  
22 of Paula without the legislature, or the legislature without  
23 Paula, seemed unthinkable; and

24 WHEREAS, Paula's soft heart, as well as her energy, smile,  
25 laughter, sense of humor, institutional memory, ability to cry

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1 at the drop of a hat and downright amazing ability to sense the  
2 presence of chocolate in a room no matter how well it was  
3 hidden, will be missed by all who have worked with her and  
4 learned from her;

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
6 OF NEW MEXICO that Paula Tackett be honored for her  
7 unparalleled commitment not only to the legislature as an  
8 institution but also to the hundreds of individual legislators  
9 who came to Santa Fe to serve their districts during her time  
10 at the council service; and

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

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