

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING AN INTERIM LEGISLATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF REDUCING ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION LEVELS FOR DRIVERS UNDER TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF AGE FROM TWO ONE-HUNDREDTHS TO ZERO.

WHEREAS, the drinking age in New Mexico is twenty-one, and consumption of alcohol by anyone under age twenty-one is illegal, except when consumed on private, non-alcohol premises with the consent of a legal guardian or for religious purposes; and

WHEREAS, underage drinking attracts many developing adolescents and teens, putting them at risk of death from alcohol-related car crashes, homicides and suicides; serious injuries such as falls, burns and drowning; impaired judgment leading to poor decisions; increased risk of physical and sexual assault; and brain development problems; and

WHEREAS, as reported in the *Journal of Substance Abuse*, young people who begin drinking before age fifteen are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and one-half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, underage drinking is a widespread public health problem in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, according to a Pacific institute for research and evaluation study, underage drinking cost the residents of

New Mexico seven hundred million dollars (\$700,000,000) in 2010, representing medical care, work loss and pain and suffering; and

WHEREAS, drivers under age twenty-one account for less than ten percent of licensed drivers, but they account for more than fifteen percent of the driving-under-the-influence-related fatalities in New Mexico, according to New Mexico drunk driving and underage driving statistics; and

WHEREAS, in many states, a zero-tolerance law applies to underage drinking, making it illegal for people under the legal age to drive with an alcohol concentration of anything but zero; and

WHEREAS, a study of the first twelve states that implemented zero-tolerance laws found that, compared with twelve other states, those with the zero-tolerance laws experienced a twenty percent relative decline in single-vehicle nighttime fatal crashes, which are those most likely to involve alcohol among drivers under age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, a public education campaign to raise awareness about Maryland's zero-tolerance law was associated with a forty-four percent decrease in the proportion of alcohol-related crashes among underage drivers in counties exposed to the campaign;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the

appropriate interim legislative committee be requested to study the effects of reducing alcohol concentration levels for drivers under twenty-one years of age from two one-hundredths to zero; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative council.