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SENATE MEMORIAL 40

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW MEXICO POET LAUREATE POSITION AND PROGRAM AND TO PROVIDE FOR DUTIES AND EXPENSES.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is one of only four states in the nation without an official state poet laureate; and

WHEREAS, no state is more culturally rich than New Mexico, having as it does a thousand years of Apache, Navajo and Pueblo storytelling, music, dance and other arts; over four hundred years of the unique blending of Spanish, Mexican, Mayan, Aztec and Mestizo cultures; and the later contributions of Anglo immigrants from "back east" and from migrations of all nationalities, ethnicities and races with their own voices and visions that enrich the land of enchantment; and

WHEREAS, poetry is an essential art that informs an

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1 understanding of the world and oneself through both the power
2 of language and the cadence of music that allow people to widen
3 their perspective on a wide range of topics; and

4 WHEREAS, as Jack Hirschman wrote in his address when he
5 became a poet laureate, "I believe that everyone is a
6 poet...and I've fought...to liberate that idea into human
7 consciousness...Why?...Because language is indeed the house of
8 Being. And poetry is the truth of Being"; and

9 WHEREAS, poetry is a means of expression that embodies the
10 human longing and desire for a better way of living and being
11 with each other, which is why, in so many countries of the
12 world, poetry and poets are highly revered; and

13 WHEREAS, as the late Adrienne Rich wrote, "I have never
14 believed that poetry is an escape from history, and I do not
15 think that it is more, or less, necessary than food, shelter,
16 health, education, decent working conditions. It is as
17 necessary"; and

18 WHEREAS, on a practical level, poetry is one of the best
19 ways for people to understand language and to make it their own
20 because poetry is the dynamic search for the exact word, for
21 the metaphor that resonates like a tuning fork with truth; and

22 WHEREAS, it is through the language of poetry that people
23 best express feelings and grapple with the issues of existence,
24 whether they be school-age children or senior citizens, farmers
25 or pharmacists; and

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1 WHEREAS, New Mexico is fortunate to have a large
2 population of poets, nationally and internationally known, or
3 simply regionally or locally recognized; and

4 WHEREAS, New Mexico is also fortunate to have an unusually
5 large and enthusiastic audience for poetry; and

6 WHEREAS, a New Mexico poet laureate would travel the state
7 to give readings in local venues; to work with students in
8 schools, with elders and with veterans groups; to conduct
9 workshops with people of all ages, cultures and circumstances;
10 and to find other ways to immerse and engage children and
11 adults in the personal and universal themes of poetry and help
12 them see how much poetry enriches their lives; and

13 WHEREAS, although a few New Mexico cities have instituted
14 poet laureate positions, there is, as yet, no state-sponsored
15 poet laureate;

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
17 OF NEW MEXICO that the cultural affairs department be requested
18 to develop a "New Mexico poet laureate" position and program to
19 foster a greater appreciation of the reading and writing of
20 poetry and to highlight the importance of poetry in the
21 everyday life of ordinary and extraordinary people; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the cultural affairs
23 department determine appropriate policies and procedures for
24 the New Mexico poet laureate position and program, including:

25 A. the nomination and selection of New Mexico poets

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1 laureate;

2 B. the terms and roles of poets laureate;

3 C. clearly defined expectations of poets laureate
4 as to public appearances, teaching, special projects, poems for
5 state occasions and other duties;

6 D. financial and program support;

7 E. programmatic continuity; and

8 F. a mechanism for replacing a poet laureate; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the cultural affairs
10 department report to the legislative finance committee by
11 November 1, 2015 on its recommendations, including necessary
12 statutory changes, on the establishment of the New Mexico poet
13 laureate program and that the department seek funding for the
14 poet laureate position and program through its budget
15 submission for fiscal year 2016 to the state budget division of
16 the department of finance and administration and the
17 legislative finance committee; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
19 transmitted to the cultural affairs department.