

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

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

WHEREAS, poetry is a means of expression that embodies

the human longing and desire for a better way of living and being with each other, which is why, in so many countries of the world, poetry and poets are highly revered; and

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, a New Mexico poet laureate would travel the state to give readings in local venues; to work with students in schools, with elders and with veterans groups; to conduct

workshops with people of all ages, cultures and circumstances; and to find other ways to immerse and engage children and adults in the personal and universal themes of poetry and help them see how much poetry enriches their lives; and

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

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

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

- A. the nomination and selection of New Mexico poets laureate;
- B. the terms and roles of poets laureate;
- C. clearly defined expectations of poets laureate as to public appearances, teaching, special projects, poems for state occasions and other duties;
- D. financial and program support;
- E. programmatic continuity; and

F. a mechanism for replacing a poet laureate; and

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

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