

HOUSE MEMORIAL 102

52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2015

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR RECLAMATION OF ABANDONED
URANIUM MINES IN NEW MEXICO AND TO KEEP NEW MEXICO'S
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION APPRISED OF ISSUES RELATED TO THE
LEGACY OF ABANDONED URANIUM MINES AND FUNDING NEEDS FOR
RECLAMATION.

WHEREAS, when the United States atomic energy commission
created the domestic uranium procurement program in the 1950s,
many companies and individuals in New Mexico responded to the
need for uranium to fuel the federal government's defense
requirements for nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS, a uranium mining industry was created almost
overnight in New Mexico, which became the largest uranium-
producing state in the nation, with over three hundred eighty

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1 million pounds produced for the nuclear weapons program; and

2 WHEREAS, the domestic uranium procurement program was very
3 successful and resulted in the operation of numerous mines
4 throughout New Mexico, mainly in Cibola and McKinley counties;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, the domestic uranium procurement program met its
7 production goals in the mid-1980s and most of the small company
8 and individual mine sites were abandoned with little or no
9 reclamation, as there were no standards or requirements for
10 reclamation at that time; and

11 WHEREAS, these uranium sites make up a legacy of abandoned
12 mines in New Mexico and few of these sites have been reclaimed
13 since the 1960s; and

14 WHEREAS, New Mexico's response to the federal government's
15 call for uranium to supply its nuclear program greatly assisted
16 America's national defense effort; and

17 WHEREAS, the support of the federal government is now
18 needed to help secure funding to reclaim these sites and
19 resolve the nearly fifty-year legacy left behind in New Mexico;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy,
22 minerals and natural resources department has identified
23 approximately two hundred fifty legacy sites on private and
24 public land where there is no record of uranium production; and

25 WHEREAS, the division has surveyed the majority of these

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1 sites to prioritize them based on potential environmental risk
2 factors in the mostly remote areas where the sites exist;

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
4 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the mining and
5 minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
6 department be requested to continue its important work and to
7 develop a program to identify the specific steps necessary to
8 begin reclaiming the surveyed abandoned uranium sites,
9 including an efficient method for estimating reclamation costs
10 when federal or other funding becomes available for this
11 purpose; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the mining and minerals
13 division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
14 department also be requested to keep New Mexico's congressional
15 delegation apprised of issues related to the legacy of
16 abandoned uranium mines in New Mexico, the results of the
17 surveyed sites and the need for funding to begin reclamation of
18 the sites; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
20 transmitted to New Mexico's congressional delegation, the
21 governor and the secretary of energy, minerals and natural
22 resources.