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HOUSE MEMORIAL 41

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2017

INTRODUCED BY

D. Wonda Johnson and Eliseo Lee Alcon

A MEMORIAL

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY 27, 2017 "URANIUM WORKERS DAY" IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEREAS, the Grants mineral belt, situated between Shiprock and the Pueblo of Laguna, contains one of the world's richest uranium deposits; and

WHEREAS, during a thirty-year period beginning in 1948, the Grants mineral belt produced more uranium than any other district in the world and accounted for one-third of all of the uranium produced in the United States during that period; and

WHEREAS, the history of uranium mining has involved small "mom and pop" surface and underground mines and large-scale commercial surface and underground mines; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation has identified over five hundred abandoned uranium mines on tribal lands; and

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1 WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy,
2 minerals and natural resources department has identified nearly
3 six hundred mine and exploration sites in McKinley, Cibola and
4 Sandoval counties alone; and

5 WHEREAS, a recent inventory study identified two hundred
6 fifty-nine uranium mine sites in New Mexico and of these, one
7 hundred thirty-seven have no record of any reclamation; and

8 WHEREAS, in addition to uranium mines, mills used to
9 process ore to yellowcake were constructed and operated at
10 seven sites in New Mexico; and

11 WHEREAS, the United States department of energy reports
12 that nearly twelve thousand persons were employed in the
13 uranium mining and milling industry in the United States in
14 1980; and

15 WHEREAS, the energy, minerals and natural resources
16 department estimates that about seven thousand people were
17 employed in the uranium industry in New Mexico in 1978, the
18 record year for uranium production in the state; and

19 WHEREAS, limited studies on the health risks to miners
20 from uranium exposure showed that Navajo uranium miners were
21 three times more likely to die from lung cancer than the United
22 States average; and

23 WHEREAS, uranium miners were five times more likely to
24 develop lung cancer than the general population; and

25 WHEREAS, exposure to dust, gases, exhaust and fumes as

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1 well as the lack of protective clothing and safety measures,
2 such as miners coming in contact with water from the mine
3 ceilings or eating their lunches while at work, can result in
4 non-malignant and malignant respiratory diseases; and

5 WHEREAS, an increased risk for kidney disease,
6 hypertension and autoimmune diseases may have occurred from
7 mining-era exposures and environmental legacy exposures; and

8 WHEREAS, the negative effects of uranium mining and
9 milling and the health impacts from working in a mine are
10 stressors for individuals and families; and

11 WHEREAS, many former workers and their families continue
12 to live in communities that have not been adequately cleaned up
13 or reclaimed and, as a result, may experience continued
14 exposure to harmful contamination in the air and environment;

15 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
16 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition
17 of the contributions of uranium workers and in recognition of
18 the ongoing health and environmental impacts as a result of
19 historical uranium industrial operations in New Mexico,
20 February 27, 2017 be designated "Uranium Workers Day" in the
21 house of representatives; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
23 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
24 delegation, the governor of the Pueblo of Laguna, the governor
25 of the Pueblo of Acoma, the president of the Navajo Nation and

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1 the county commissioners of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley
2 counties.

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