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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 1

**54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020**

INTRODUCED BY

Daymon Ely and Greg Nibert

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO STUDY THE  
FEASIBILITY OF RECONFIGURING THE INTERIM COMMITTEE STRUCTURE,  
TO SET WORK PLANS AND SCHEDULES TO ALLOW FOR GREATER  
COORDINATION OF POLICY AND APPROPRIATION PRIORITIES AND TO  
PROVIDE A REPORT TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH  
LEGISLATURE FOR ITS CONSIDERATION IN RESTRUCTURING THE INTERIM  
COMMITTEES.

WHEREAS, each year, the New Mexico legislative council  
appoints members to approximately two dozen interim committees  
and subcommittees that meet during the interim; and

WHEREAS, each year, between May and December, there are  
approximately one hundred fifty business days in which well  
over two hundred committee meeting days are scheduled; and

WHEREAS, interim committees review legislation for

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1 endorsement between mid-October and mid-December, some of which  
2 may require funding; and

3 WHEREAS, there is little or no coordination between most  
4 interim committees' proposed or endorsed legislation and the  
5 appropriations that the legislative finance committee  
6 recommends for the subsequent session; and

7 WHEREAS, a number of similar presentations are made before  
8 more than one committee, with executive and judicial branch  
9 departments and agencies often appearing before two, three or  
10 sometimes four committees to present and discuss the same  
11 issues with similar or identical material; and

12 WHEREAS, in its 2007 final report, the legislative  
13 structure and process study task force stated that there is a  
14 "sense that interim committee work is less relevant to session  
15 work than it was years ago", and the task force noted that  
16 between 1979 and 2007, the number of interim committees doubled  
17 and the number of committees with ten or more voting members  
18 tripled; and

19 WHEREAS, the task force noted that there is educational  
20 value in interim committee work but that the increased level of  
21 demand of the interim "dilutes the legislature's ability to  
22 make policy effectively by spreading the legislature's  
23 attention too broadly"; and

24 WHEREAS, the task force recommended that the number of  
25 interim committees be limited to no more than twelve, including

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1 the legislative finance committee and the legislative education  
2 study committee, while keeping the New Mexico legislative  
3 council for administrative purposes and the interim legislative  
4 ethics committee and the committee on compacts because of the  
5 limited and special nature of those committees; and

6 WHEREAS, the legislative structure and process study task  
7 force's recommendations for the interim structure twelve years  
8 ago stated:

9 Reconfigure the interim committee structure by  
10 limiting the number of interim committees to twelve,  
11 reduce the number of advisory members appointed to  
12 interim committees, coordinate staffing needs among  
13 the permanent staffs, respect the different sizes of  
14 the houses and increase the number of days members  
15 may be reimbursed for attending meetings of the  
16 committees to which they are not appointed; and

17 WHEREAS, since the legislative structure and process study  
18 task force's recommendations, the number of committees has not  
19 decreased; the number of advisory members, based on fifteen  
20 comparable committees, has increased considerably, from about  
21 one hundred ninety-eight in 2007 to about two hundred forty-two  
22 in 2019; and the number of designees for the legislative  
23 finance committee has increased from twenty-six to forty-one;  
24 and

25 WHEREAS, although members are now allowed to attend up to

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1 five meeting days of committees of which they are not members,  
2 a number of committees have nonetheless had to conduct business  
3 as special subcommittees where a quorum was lacking, and in  
4 some cases committees have lacked enough members for even a  
5 special subcommittee; and

6 WHEREAS, the New Mexico legislature has traditionally been  
7 dependent on the strength of its interim and standing  
8 committees to make policy and appropriation decisions, while  
9 the relevance and effectiveness of interim committees is now in  
10 question as many members are unable to attend all of the  
11 meetings of committees to which they are appointed, and the  
12 culmination of a committee's work is usually reflected in  
13 endorsed legislation, which is seldom a consideration of the  
14 work done by the legislative finance committee, or vice versa;  
15 and

16 WHEREAS, the lack of a coordinated legislative structure  
17 in setting the state's policy and appropriation priorities  
18 during the interim, as well as the number of committees,  
19 meeting days and advisory members, dilutes the effectiveness of  
20 the state legislature;

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
22 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico legislative council be  
23 requested to study the interim committee structure to be  
24 reconfigured by limiting the number of interim committees to  
25 twelve, reducing the number of advisory members appointed to

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1 interim committees and increasing the number of days members  
2 may be reimbursed for attending meetings of committees to which  
3 they were not appointed; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the interim and statutory  
5 interim committees be requested to set their work plans and  
6 schedules to allow for greater coordination of policy and  
7 appropriation priorities; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico legislative  
9 council be requested to consider making these changes to the  
10 interim committee structure, including limitations on or  
11 temporary suspensions of statutory committees, and that the New  
12 Mexico legislative council provide a report to the first  
13 session of the fifty-fifth legislature for its consideration in  
14 restructuring the interim committees; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
16 transmitted to the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative  
17 council and the director of the legislative council service.