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HOUSE MEMORIAL 33

56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2023

INTRODUCED BY

Patricia A. Lundstrom and D. Wonda Johnson and Harry Garcia and
Eliseo Lee Alcon and Anthony Allison

A MEMORIAL

DECLARING FEBRUARY 14, 2023 "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 people were employed in the uranium
13 mining and milling industry in the United States in 1980; and

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, exposure to dust, gases, exhaust and fumes as
25 well as the lack of protective clothing and safety measures,

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

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

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

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

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
15 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that recognition be
16 extended to uranium workers and that February 14, 2023 be
17 proclaimed "Uranium Workers Day" in the house of
18 representatives; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
20 transmitted to members of the New Mexico congressional
21 delegation, the governor of the Pueblo of Laguna, the governor
22 of the Pueblo of Acoma, the president of the Navajo Nation and
23 the county commissioners of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley
24 counties.