

A JOINT MEMORIAL

DECLARING FEBRUARY 27, 2003 AS "BILINGUAL EDUCATION DAY" AT THE
LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is fortunate to be a multilingual, multicultural state,
where multiple languages and cultures come together to form a unique, living-and-
breathing mosaic; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is the only state in the United States that has a
commitment to the Spanish language written into its constitution; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has a long and significant history of recognizing
bilingualism and bilingual education; and

WHEREAS, in 1523, the king of Spain issued a proclamation to all priests
serving in America to learn the language of the natives of Mexico and the northern
territory to facilitate the teaching of the holy scriptures in the languages of the natives;
and

WHEREAS, in 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's exploration of New
Mexico was done bilingually, in Spanish and Nahuatl, assuming the latter to be the
language of the natives in the north; and

WHEREAS, in 1848, English was added as the ninth language in New Mexico's
multilingual mix, which consisted of Navajo, Apache, Keres, Tewa, Tiwa, Towa, Zuni
and Spanish; and

WHEREAS, the 1891 Public Education Act did not bar instruction in Spanish,
alongside English, and much of the school curriculum was in both languages; and

WHEREAS, during the constitutional convention of 1912, Spanish and English

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were declared the official languages of the state; and

WHEREAS, the first bilingual education policy statement in the United States was issued by the state board of education in 1968, and the first bilingual education law in the United States was issued by the New Mexico legislature in 1969; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico legislature authorized dual language immersion training institutes at three universities in 1994, and pilot programs of two-way dual language immersion were initiated in five school districts in the state in 1996; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that students who are bilingual and biliterate are better prepared to succeed academically than are monolingual students, and knowledge of more than one language is advantageous for all students in the interglobal marketplace, where bilingualism and biliteracy are assets;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that February 27, 2003 be declared "Bilingual Education Day" at the legislature.

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