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SENATE MEMORIAL 56

**48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2008**

INTRODUCED BY

John C. Ryan

A MEMORIAL

MARKING THE NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAY CODY UNSER WAS  
STRICKEN WITH TRANSVERSE MYELITIS AND DECLARING FEBRUARY 5,  
2008 "CODY UNSER DAY" AT THE SENATE.

WHEREAS, Cody Unser was stricken suddenly with transverse  
myelitis, commonly called TM, on February 5, 1999; and

WHEREAS, Cody, a basketball-playing sixth-grade girl,  
became paralyzed from the chest down and has remained so ever  
since; and

WHEREAS, the past nine years have transformed Cody's life,  
and she has transformed the level of support, research for and  
understanding of transverse myelitis and other spinal cord  
diseases and injuries; and

WHEREAS, Cody's reaction to learning to live in a  
wheelchair was to learn to scuba dive and to create a

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1 charitable foundation to seek a cure for TM; and

2 WHEREAS, that foundation is called the Cody Unser First  
3 Step Foundation, and it continues to build awareness of TM,  
4 promote medical cooperation and stimulate research; and

5 WHEREAS, Cody accepted Governor Richardson's request to  
6 serve as his national disabilities spokeswoman for his recent  
7 presidential bid; and

8 WHEREAS, as part of her promotion of funding for research,  
9 Cody has successfully helped the University of New Mexico  
10 become a center of excellence, attracting new funding for New  
11 Mexico research on spinal cord injuries and diseases; and

12 WHEREAS, the Cody Unser First Step Foundation has formed  
13 charitable relationships with the Johns Hopkins Transverse  
14 Myelitis Center and its medical consortium affiliates, the  
15 Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, the Kennedy-Krieger  
16 Spine Institute, the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, the  
17 Barrow Neurological Institute and the Transverse Myelitis  
18 Association and, most recently, New Mexico's Governor's  
19 Commission on Disability; and

20 WHEREAS, the foundation has awarded over one hundred  
21 thousand dollars (\$100,000) to related research and education  
22 endeavors; and

23 WHEREAS, Cody is an ambassador for the Quickie Wheelchair  
24 events at Sunrise Medical, for Johns Hopkins' "PROJECT RESTORE"  
25 and for many symposia and consortia, and she hosts the "Winners

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1 on Wheels" web site; and

2 WHEREAS, Cody was named "One of the 21 coolest girls in  
3 America" by *YM Magazine*; and

4 WHEREAS, Cody has won *New Mexico Business Weekly's* "Power  
5 Kid" award, the national Prudential "Spirit of the Community"  
6 award and the National Philanthropy Day's President's Award,  
7 and she was the youngest-ever recipient of the YWCA "Women on  
8 the Move" award; and

9 WHEREAS, Cody also won the Grand Prix Americas  
10 Foundation's "Special Achievement Award" and now sits on the  
11 board of the Paralysis Health Action Plan Task Force in  
12 Washington, D.C.; and

13 WHEREAS, in recent years, Cody has worked tirelessly for  
14 all quality-of-life programs for people with disabilities,  
15 including her own, sponsoring several "Cody's Great Scuba  
16 Adventure" programs; and

17 WHEREAS, the scuba program has now expanded, and Cody has  
18 enlisted other trainers to train people with other disabilities  
19 in scuba diving; and

20 WHEREAS, President Gerald and Betty Ford selected Cody as  
21 the recipient of the "People Helping People" award for the  
22 "Swim with Mike" program; and

23 WHEREAS, Cody was the first-ever recipient of the "Spinal  
24 Cord Injury Project Emerging Leader" award; and

25 WHEREAS, Cody has met with national and international

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1 leaders, including President Bush; Prince Andrew; Senators Pete  
2 Dominici, Jeff Bingaman, Hillary Clinton and Bill Frist; United  
3 States Representatives Heather Wilson and Diane DeGette;  
4 federal Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson; and  
5 the late Christopher Reeve and his late wife, Dana, to aid in  
6 their promotion of stem cell research; and

7 WHEREAS, Cody has been featured in numerous magazines,  
8 bringing to light the realities of living with a disability in  
9 the United States today, not only for those with TM but for  
10 those with other disabilities as well, and advocating for stem  
11 cell research; and

12 WHEREAS, Cody has been featured on *Good Morning America*,  
13 *48 Hours* and *CNN* to focus interest on persons with  
14 disabilities, and she is now the subject of a documentary  
15 entitled "Cody", which is narrated by actor Paul Newman and  
16 produced by the city of Santa Fe and Christopher Productions,  
17 that reveals Cody in her day-to-day life as a full-time student  
18 at Redlands University; and

19 WHEREAS, having found her voice as a political activist  
20 early in life, Cody created her own degree program in  
21 biopolitics, with the intention of changing health policy from  
22 both the medical perspective and the legal perspective;

23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
24 OF NEW MEXICO that February 5, 2008 be declared "Cody Unser  
25 Day" at the senate in recognition of the good work of this

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1 young woman and her sincere and tireless dedication to the  
2 cause of stem cell research; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Cody's indomitable spirit be  
4 celebrated as the senate marks the day that this outstanding  
5 young woman was stricken with transverse myelitis; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
7 transmitted to the Cody Unser First Step Foundation, the Johns  
8 Hopkins Transverse Myelitis Center and its medical consortium  
9 and University of New Mexico Carrie Tingley Children's  
10 Hospital.