

1 A JOINT MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IN COOPERATION
3 WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY
4 STUDY TO INSTALL A BRIDGE BARRIER ON THE RIO GRANDE GORGE
5 BRIDGE.

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7 WHEREAS, deaths resulting from suicide attempts or
8 accidental falls from the Rio Grande gorge bridge in Taos
9 county have increased in recent years; and

10 WHEREAS, the cost of rescue efforts and the danger to
11 emergency responders has increased commensurately with such
12 incidents; and

13 WHEREAS, the Rio Grande gorge bridge has become a
14 significant tourist attraction, and the increasing traffic on
15 the bridge also contributes to higher risks for visitors and
16 public safety personnel; and

17 WHEREAS, New Mexico currently ranks fourth in the United
18 States for its suicide rate, which is one and one-half to two
19 times the national average; and

20 WHEREAS, the suicide rates among all ethnicities and age
21 groups are four times higher among males (thirty-one and
22 six-tenths per one hundred thousand) than females (six and
23 nine-tenths per one hundred thousand); and

24 WHEREAS, suicide is the ninth-leading cause of death for
25 New Mexicans, and suicide is the second-leading cause of

1 death among persons fifteen to twenty-four years of age and
2 the fourth-leading cause of death among persons thirty-five
3 to fifty-four years of age; and

4 WHEREAS, suicide at the Rio Grande gorge bridge accounts
5 for over fifty percent of all suicides in the Taos county
6 area; and

7 WHEREAS, the national suicide prevention lifeline
8 steering committee has stated its position that the use of
9 bridge barriers is the most effective means of bridge suicide
10 prevention;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
12 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of transportation be
13 requested to conduct a feasibility study in cooperation with
14 the department of public safety for the construction or
15 installation of bridge barriers and safety enhancing
16 improvements to the Rio Grande gorge bridge on United States
17 highway 64 in Taos county; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of
19 transportation report its findings to the appropriate
20 committee of the legislature by December 1, 2009; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
22 transmitted to the secretary of transportation and the
23 secretary of public safety. _____