

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 46

2 **49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO COMPILE DATA AND DEVELOP
12 REGIONAL HEALTH PROFILES FOR THREE SPECIFIC VULNERABLE
13 GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF NEW MEXICO.

14
15 WHEREAS, regions of environmental injustice exist within
16 New Mexico as identified in listening sessions and documented
17 in a report on environmental justice in New Mexico sponsored by
18 the department of environment; and

19 WHEREAS, poor communities and communities of color are
20 disproportionately and negatively affected by the siting and
21 processes of dirty and polluting industries; and

22 WHEREAS, cumulative environmental pollution and
23 contamination affect every aspect of community life, including
24 health, work, poverty and happiness, and can cause loss of
25 life, diminished economic status and decreased quality of life;

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1 and

2 WHEREAS, detailed and compiled information concerning
3 environmental health problems in communities will enhance
4 decision-making and planning for the provision of health
5 services and the provisions of education regarding the benefits
6 of prevention and will aid in decisions about whether to permit
7 regulated facilities in compromised or potentially compromised
8 regions; and

9 WHEREAS, this compiled information will make data
10 available to communities and individuals so that they may
11 decide on appropriate programs and services that will provide
12 prevention, protection, job safety, security and community and
13 economic development; and

14 WHEREAS, decisions that have been made in New Mexico as a
15 result of the nuclear energy and nuclear weapons industries
16 have created more risks than benefits to the residents of the
17 state; and

18 WHEREAS, more than five decades of the mining, milling and
19 processing of uranium, known as the uranium legacy, has left
20 devastating contamination of land, air and water and has
21 brought harm to people and animals in the area of western New
22 Mexico that is known as the uranium belt; and

23 WHEREAS, the uranium belt includes the regions of the
24 state around the Pueblo of Laguna and the Pueblo of Acoma, the
25 cities of Grants and Milan and the Ambrosia lake, Crownpoint

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1 and Church Rock areas; and

2 WHEREAS, a lack of compensation for uranium mining
3 injuries and health problems, inadequate health services and
4 insufficient and uncoordinated studies have contributed to the
5 poor health of indigenous people who reside in the uranium
6 belt; and

7 WHEREAS, many residents who live in and within a twenty-
8 mile radius of Mesquite, New Mexico, have suffered health
9 problems that they believe were at least partly caused by the
10 presence of industries whose emissions contaminated the air,
11 soil and water; and

12 WHEREAS, the community of Mountain View, New Mexico,
13 located in the southwest quadrant of Bernalillo county, has
14 suffered a variety of health problems, ranging from asthma to
15 cancer and other life-threatening conditions that may be
16 attributable to the proximity of residents to various
17 industries located there; and

18 WHEREAS, although studies have been conducted to evaluate
19 the health problems of residents in these areas, no database
20 was developed to compare the findings of these studies, and
21 there has been no coordination to determine the correlation
22 between industry and illness in disparate locations in New
23 Mexico; and

24 WHEREAS, the department of environment has shown a
25 commitment to environmental justice and has been recognized for

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1 this by the national environmental justice advisory council of
2 the United States environmental protection agency; and

3 WHEREAS, on November 18, 2005, Governor Richardson signed
4 an environmental justice executive order that commits cabinet-
5 level departments to work together to achieve environmental
6 justice;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
8 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health be requested
9 to compile data and develop regional health profiles for three
10 specific vulnerable geographic regions of New Mexico; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health
12 collect and compile health data specifically in the uranium
13 belt, in the area within a twenty-mile radius of Mesquite, New
14 Mexico, and in the community of Mountain View, New Mexico, and
15 that it develop a detailed regional health profile for each of
16 those regions; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health
18 accumulate available, existing environmental health data from
19 such sources as state and federal research institutions,
20 advocacy organizations, nonprofit environmental health
21 organizations, state and federal government agencies with
22 information on environmental health issues and industry
23 experts; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the compiled data be recorded
25 in a detailed and descriptive manner that identifies specific

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1 health conditions, that are found to be related to
2 environmental conditions and that death certificates recorded
3 by the department of health include disease-specific causes of
4 death; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recorded data be available
6 and used to inform environmental health policy and planning
7 decisions in New Mexico; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
9 transmitted to the department of health and the department of
10 environment.