

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND FISH AND NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE WORK TOGETHER USING EXISTING RESOURCES TO CREATE A PILOT TRAFFIC SAFETY PROJECT IN AN ACCIDENT-PRONE AREA OF THE STATE TO SAVE LIVES BY REDUCING COLLISIONS BETWEEN LARGE ANIMALS AND VEHICLES.

WHEREAS, vehicle collisions with large animals such as elk, deer, bears, mountain lions and cattle kill or injure both humans and animals every year; and

WHEREAS, research shows that having drivers reduce their speed on specific sections of roads where more crashes happen lowers the number of accidents; and

WHEREAS, young drivers between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are more likely to be involved in a car accident with a large animal than any other age group of drivers because they are learning how to drive and often are distracted by texting, cell phones and other technology; and

WHEREAS, an estimated seven hundred twenty-five thousand to one million five hundred thousand animal-vehicle collisions occur in the United States every year, resulting in over two hundred human deaths and twenty-nine thousand human injuries; and

WHEREAS, according to a report to congress of national trends by the federal highway administration, during the

period between 1990 and 2004, the number of animal-vehicle collisions increased by about fifty percent while the total number of accidents remained about the same; and

WHEREAS, animal-vehicle collisions result in increased costs for dealing with injured or killed humans and animals, cleaning up roads, repairing damaged vehicles and higher automobile insurance rates; and

WHEREAS, reducing vehicle speeds in a busy wildlife crossing zone can allow drivers time to compensate for the increased probability of being involved in an accident; and

WHEREAS, it takes two hundred ten feet for a car traveling at thirty-five miles per hour to stop, four hundred three feet at fifty-five miles per hour and six hundred fifty feet at seventy-five miles per hour, thereby demonstrating that the slower someone drives the greater the chance of stopping prior to hitting an animal; and

WHEREAS, there are more than four million miles of roads in the United States and two hundred six thousand miles of roads in New Mexico, which is too many miles to fence to keep animals off the roads; and

WHEREAS, according to research by the Los Alamos national laboratory, the number of animal-vehicle collisions is greatest between four o'clock a.m. and eight o'clock a.m. and between four o'clock p.m. and eight o'clock p.m.; and

WHEREAS, a study by the institute of transportation

engineers found that sixty-nine to eighty-five percent of animal-vehicle collisions in the United States are at night; and

WHEREAS, during the fall, animals are on the move, and it is especially important to drive slower during this time; and

WHEREAS, New Mexicans need to take responsibility not to litter and to pick up trash because littering attracts animals out into the open, making them vulnerable to accidents; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Colorado passed the nation's first wildlife speed zone law requiring that drivers slow down in designated wildlife crossing zones to protect citizens and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, Colorado is using fines collected from speeders in wildlife crossing zones to reduce the costs of implementing that program; and

WHEREAS, if New Mexico could save one life or prevent one serious injury, then this pilot project will be worth the effort;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of transportation, department of game and fish and the New Mexico state police be requested to work together, using existing resources such as signs and lights, to create a pilot traffic safety project in an accident-prone area of the state to increase the safety of

New Mexico's residents by reducing large animal-vehicle collisions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in designing the project, the participating state agencies consider reducing the speed limit and doubling the fines for speeding in the wildlife crossing zone; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of transportation, the department of game and fish and the New Mexico state police be requested to send a joint report on the pilot project and their recommendations to the appropriate interim committee by June 30, 2012; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all appropriate state agencies be requested to include information for drivers about how to avoid animal-vehicle collisions on their web sites and in their brochures if appropriate and when resources allow; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the governor be requested to issue a proclamation declaring a day to promote slowing down for the safety of drivers and wildlife; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the commissioner of public lands, the department of game and fish, the state parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department, the department of transportation and the New Mexico state police.