

A MEMORIAL

HONORING JONELLE MAISON ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE AND THANKING HER FOR HER MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, Jonelle Maison – bill drafter extraordinaire, author of massive and complicated bills, stalwart defender of the state's constitution and, most important, keeper of the M and Ms – retired from the legislative council service on December 31, 2010; and

WHEREAS, never one to let a technicality stop her from doing what she loves, Jonelle stayed beyond her retirement date to work as a contract drafter for the 2011 session because her time working with what she calls "the first" among the three branches of government has been exceptionally swell; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle started her career at the roundhouse working as a temporary proofreader, and when permanent work as a receptionist was offered, she took it even though she hated answering telephones and, one can only surmise, had a difficult time hiding that fact from the callers; and

WHEREAS, a vacancy in the proofing department rescued her from the tyranny of ringing telephones, and after quickly rising to the position of editor and immersing herself in the language and structure of New Mexico law, she was promoted to

bill drafter; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle moved her body, if not her soul, down the street to work for the administrative office of the courts as a management analyst, but when she found herself unable to figure out just what a management analyst was supposed to do, she "came home" to work as a contractor with the house appropriations and finance committee and the legislative finance committee and, later, as a permanent employee of the council service; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle is one of a rare breed – a bill drafter who is not an attorney and who learned the intricacies of the law not in a lecture hall but in the roundhouse trenches, over the course of three decades and more sessions than anyone else on the fourth floor has survived, with the possible exception of Saint Stella in the governor's office; and

WHEREAS, her lack of a law school imprimatur never got in her way; she eventually became a senior drafter and trained, critiqued, mentored, outlasted and out-drafted dozens of staff attorneys who passed through the council service during her tenure; and

WHEREAS, if learning about New Mexico state government and law from Jonelle could, at times, be akin to drinking water from a firehose, she could hardly be faulted for her enthusiasm for the topic and her encyclopedic memory of not only the state's contemporary laws but also its more

entertaining historical oddities; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle's specialty became the dreaded big bills, whether they were reorganizing state government, performing major surgery on the Public School Code or merging the public utility commission with the corporation commission, and though it was clear she loved the challenge and would have it no other way, she could sometimes be heard moaning, "Oh, Lord, just shoot me now"; and

WHEREAS, Jonelle was always willing to go to the mat over constitutional issues, and many legislators, green and not-so-green, were treated to her exclamation, "But your bill violates the constitution!" and to her signature body language that so clearly said, "Anyone who even THINKS about violating the antidonation clause can meet me outside ... "; and

WHEREAS, lioness though she may have been over some matters, Jonelle was actually the office softie – when it came to baby showers, retirement parties and all-around festive events, she was the first to sign up to deck the halls, and many visitors under the age of five gravitated to her office to boogie with her dancing flower pot or sprawl on the floor with toys; and

WHEREAS, though she has spent decades immersed in the dry verbiage of legislative drafting, Jonelle's native tongue is the colorful turn of phrase – she often told proofreaders "please don't maunder over my bill", and she would describe

the pedigree of certain laws by saying that they had been on the books "since God was a goose" – and while some of her most colorful turns of phrase cannot be read out loud in the house chamber, she will always be fondly remembered in the back halls of the council service for her frequent emphatic references to ducks; and

WHEREAS, the back halls and front halls alike will be lesser places without Jonelle's laughter, gusto and flair, as well as her fierce dedication to the legislature and to the career that she claims she just "fell into";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that deep appreciation be extended to Jonelle Maison for her many years of service to the legislature as a drafter, teacher, committee staffer, analyst, liaison, mentor, proofreader, editor, capital outlay "honcha", challenged receptionist and, most of all, loyal friend of the institution, even when faced with tempting work offers elsewhere, such as on Jerry King's ranch; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be given to Jonelle before she leaves town to go off gallivanting on her next trip abroad, with warmest wishes for a retirement that is nothing short of coolarama.