

A MEMORIAL

HONORING PAULA TACKETT, DESPITE HER PROTESTATIONS, BECAUSE SHE KNOWS BETTER THAN TO THINK THE LEGISLATURE WOULD ALLOW HER TO RETIRE DURING THE INTERIM AND GO QUIETLY INTO THE NIGHT WITHOUT DUE RECOGNITION FROM THE BODY SHE SERVED SO WELL FOR SO LONG.

WHEREAS, Paula Tackett retired from the legislative council service in June 2010 after nearly twenty-three years as director or, as she sometimes referred to her multifaceted job, the legislature's "head janitor"; and

WHEREAS, though her predecessor, Clay Buchanan, was a hard act to follow, Paula went on to leave as indelible a mark on the council service as he did, and the occasional staff comment she heard in her early days, "When CLAY was in charge..." has now become "When PAULA was in charge..."; and

WHEREAS, Paula's path to a career with the legislature and the law may have begun with her job at the Wharf restaurant in Virginia during the Watergate hearings when, after waiting on such notables as John Dean and Fred Fielding, she decided, "If either of those guys can be a lawyer, I can be a lawyer."; and

WHEREAS, after earning her law degree from the university of New Mexico, Paula clerked at the New Mexico court of appeals and supreme court and worked at the law firm

of White, Koch, Kelly and McCarthy, where she distinguished herself not only as the first female attorney at the firm, but also as the firm's only attorney to accept a bundle of rainbow trout as payment for legal services; and

WHEREAS, Paula moved from private-sector attorney to public-sector attorney when she joined the council service in 1982, and within six years, she went from a somewhat regular job of bill drafter in the back to the sometimes daunting job of director out front; and

WHEREAS, if Paula's presence seemed to her staff like sharing an office with a whirlwind, it was partly due to her vivacious personality, but it was also due to the demands of the job, which ranged from administering the drafting, legal and research agency of the legislature to serving on numerous boards and commissions and overseeing the capitol facilities and grounds; and

WHEREAS, though these statutory duties were a full-time job by themselves, Paula also set aside time to serve on committees and task forces that dealt with her pet topics of capital outlay, education and art; and

WHEREAS, Paula was a driving force behind the establishment of the capitol art foundation and the permanent art collection that now draws thousands of visitors to the capitol each year, even in a city saturated with art venues; and

WHEREAS, Paula managed – and lived through – two major renovations of the capitol, during which time her usual sartorial flair was augmented even further by a hard hat that, by some accounts, she never once took off; and

WHEREAS, Paula also lived through the design and construction of the capitol parking facility and three office moves as the council service bounced from the third floor of the roundhouse to temporary quarters across the street, back to the third floor again and, finally, up to the fourth floor; and

WHEREAS, despite her inclinations to the contrary, Paula helped the legislature transition out of the typewriter-and-mimeograph age into the computer age with the development of the integrated information system that now serves all legislative entities; and

WHEREAS, Paula's *tour de force* may have been her involvement with the annual capital outlay legislation, which ballooned from a manageable bill of a few hundred projects in her early years as director to a massive bill containing thousands of projects in her final years, and she topped off her career by pulling all-nighters to serve as an expert witness on a capital outlay void bill that, at times, stumped attorneys in three agencies; and

WHEREAS, Paula, a self-described "political process junkie", was perfectly at home in the push, pull and swirl of

politics; her tenure spanned several leadership changes in the house and senate as well as changes in the governor's office, and she worked with, outlasted and, if the occasion warranted, gently took the shine off hundreds of legislators and legislative staff members over the years; and

WHEREAS, despite whatever crisis may have been consuming the legislature, Paula kept her staff close to her heart; while she could not always protect them from grueling work schedules or last-minute demands from downstairs, she would soften the blows by personally delivering flowers office-to-office, hosting home-cooked dinners for bleary-eyed staff and, when she thought no one was looking, scraping snow-covered windshields in the staff parking lot at midnight; and

WHEREAS, many in the roundhouse knew for years that Paula could retire but, somehow, thought she never would, as the idea of Paula without the legislature, or the legislature without Paula, seemed unthinkable; and

WHEREAS, Paula's soft heart, as well as her energy, smile, laughter, sense of humor, institutional memory, ability to cry at the drop of a hat and downright amazing ability to sense the presence of chocolate in a room no matter how well it was hidden, will be missed by all who have worked with her and learned from her;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that Paula Tackett

be honored for her unparalleled commitment not only to the legislature as an institution but also to the hundreds of individual legislators who came to Santa Fe to serve their districts during her time at the council service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be given to Paula with warmest wishes for a retirement that makes up for all the unused annual leave that accumulated while she was making the legislature accessible to all and maintaining the roundhouse's reputation as, truly, the "people's house".