

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP
3 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW MEXICO POET
4 LAUREATE POSITION AND PROGRAM AND TO PROVIDE FOR DUTIES AND
5 EXPENSES.

6
7 WHEREAS, New Mexico is one of only four states in the
8 nation without an official state poet laureate; and

9 WHEREAS, no state is more culturally rich than
10 New Mexico, having as it does a thousand years of Apache,
11 Navajo and Pueblo storytelling, music, dance and other arts;
12 over four hundred years of the unique blending of Spanish,
13 Mexican, Mayan, Aztec and Mestizo cultures; and the later
14 contributions of Anglo immigrants from "back east" and from
15 migrations of all nationalities, ethnicities and races with
16 their own voices and visions that enrich the land of
17 enchantment; and

18 WHEREAS, poetry is an essential art that informs an
19 understanding of the world and oneself through both the power
20 of language and the cadence of music that allow people to
21 widen their perspective on a wide range of topics; and

22 WHEREAS, as Jack Hirschman wrote in his address when he
23 became a poet laureate, "I believe that everyone is a
24 poet...and I've fought...to liberate that idea into human
25 consciousness...Why?...Because language is indeed the house

1 of Being. And poetry is the truth of Being"; and

2 WHEREAS, poetry is a means of expression that embodies
3 the human longing and desire for a better way of living and
4 being with each other, which is why, in so many countries of
5 the world, poetry and poets are highly revered; and

6 WHEREAS, as the late Adrienne Rich wrote, "I have never
7 believed that poetry is an escape from history, and I do not
8 think that it is more, or less, necessary than food, shelter,
9 health, education, decent working conditions. It is as
10 necessary"; and

11 WHEREAS, on a practical level, poetry is one of the best
12 ways for people to understand language and to make it their
13 own because poetry is the dynamic search for the exact word,
14 for the metaphor that resonates like a tuning fork with
15 truth; and

16 WHEREAS, it is through the language of poetry that
17 people best express feelings and grapple with the issues of
18 existence, whether they be school-age children or senior
19 citizens, farmers or pharmacists; and

20 WHEREAS, New Mexico is fortunate to have a large
21 population of poets, nationally and internationally known, or
22 simply regionally or locally recognized; and

23 WHEREAS, New Mexico is also fortunate to have an
24 unusually large and enthusiastic audience for poetry; and

25 WHEREAS, a New Mexico poet laureate would travel the

1 state to give readings in local venues; to work with students
2 in schools, with elders and with veterans groups; to conduct
3 workshops with people of all ages, cultures and
4 circumstances; and to find other ways to immerse and engage
5 children and adults in the personal and universal themes of
6 poetry and help them see how much poetry enriches their
7 lives; and

8 WHEREAS, although a few New Mexico cities have
9 instituted poet laureate positions, there is, as yet, no
10 state-sponsored poet laureate;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
12 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the cultural affairs department be
13 requested to develop a "New Mexico poet laureate" position
14 and program to foster a greater appreciation of the reading
15 and writing of poetry and to highlight the importance of
16 poetry in the everyday life of ordinary and extraordinary
17 people; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the cultural affairs
19 department determine appropriate policies and procedures for
20 the New Mexico poet laureate position and program, including:

21 A. the nomination and selection of New Mexico
22 poets laureate;

23 B. the terms and roles of poets laureate;

24 C. clearly defined expectations of poets laureate
25 as to public appearances, teaching, special projects, poems

1 for state occasions and other duties;

2 D. financial and program support;

3 E. programmatic continuity; and

4 F. a mechanism for replacing a poet laureate; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the cultural affairs
6 department report to the legislative finance committee by
7 November 1, 2015 on its recommendations, including necessary
8 statutory changes, on the establishment of the New Mexico
9 poet laureate program and that the department seek funding
10 for the poet laureate position and program through its budget
11 submission for fiscal year 2016 to the state budget division
12 of the department of finance and administration and the
13 legislative finance committee; and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
15 transmitted to the cultural affairs department. _____

SM 40
Page 4

16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25