

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 18

2 **52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2015**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACEQUIAS TO NEW MEXICO'S CULTURE
12 AND ECONOMY AND REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
13 TO ASSIGN THE APPROPRIATE INTERIM COMMITTEE TO DEDICATE ONE OR
14 MORE DAYS IN THE INTERIM TO ADDRESS ACEQUIA ISSUES.

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16 WHEREAS, the cultural landscape of New Mexico has been
17 shaped by hundreds of acequias that have sustained families and
18 communities for centuries by serving as the basis for local
19 food production and water governance; and

20 WHEREAS, acequias embody the fundamental principle that
21 water is life, and they continue to operate under basic
22 principles that have guided them for millennia, including the
23 concepts of local self-governance, attachment of water to place
24 and community and sharing scarce water through local customs
25 known as the repartimiento; and

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1 WHEREAS, New Mexico is a place of chronic water scarcity
2 and is facing unprecedented demands for water to support
3 continued growth and development; and

4 WHEREAS, a prevalent assumption is that water rights to
5 support growth will come as a result of water transfers out of
6 agriculture to urban and commercial development; and

7 WHEREAS, acequias and agricultural communities are
8 economically disadvantaged and are likely to experience a net
9 loss of water rights from their communities as wealthier
10 individuals, entities and regions acquire water rights from a
11 position of greater economic power; and

12 WHEREAS, as a result of regional water planning efforts,
13 projections based on current trends include estimates of a net
14 loss of agriculture of between thirty percent and sixty percent
15 in certain regions in the next forty years; and

16 WHEREAS, in recent years, the legislature has expressed
17 support for acequias by enacting various laws that strengthen
18 acequia governance, including recognition of regulatory
19 authority over water transfers, establishment of acequia water
20 banking and strengthening of acequia enforcement powers
21 regarding easements; and

22 WHEREAS, the acequia commission was established by statute
23 in 1993 and serves as a facilitator for communication between
24 local acequia and community ditch organizations, including the
25 New Mexico acequia association, and the state and federal

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1 governments; reviews plans and legislation that may affect
2 acequias and community ditch associations; and advises and
3 assists the governor, legislature, state engineer, interstate
4 stream commission and United States army corps of engineers on
5 those issues; and

6 WHEREAS, the legislative interim committee process is one
7 of the few avenues by which the acequia commission and acequia
8 associations have an opportunity to address and educate
9 legislators on issues affecting acequias and community ditches;

10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
11 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico legislative council be
12 requested to direct the appropriate interim committee dealing
13 with land grant issues or water and natural resource issues to
14 dedicate one or more meeting days solely to issues affecting
15 acequia and community ditch associations; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the acequia commission be
17 requested to prioritize the issues that need to be addressed in
18 the forthcoming interim and work with regional and state
19 acequia associations in developing those priorities; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
21 transmitted to the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative
22 council, the acequia commission, the state engineer, the
23 interstate stream commission, the land grant council and the
24 office of the governor.