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HOUSE MEMORIAL 95

**51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014**

INTRODUCED BY

Georgene Louis

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO COMPILE EXISTING DATA ON THE HEALTH OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS IMPACTED BY URANIUM MINING IN THE GRANTS MINERAL BELT, DEVELOP A HEALTH PROFILE BASELINE FOR THOSE CITIZENS AND PROPOSE MINING PERMIT CONDITIONS THAT CAN MITIGATE HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MINING AND ALLEVIATE THE CONTINUING NEGATIVE HEALTH-RELATED CONSEQUENCES OF HISTORICAL MINING ACTIVITY.

WHEREAS, the Grants mineral belt produced more uranium than any other district in the world from the 1940s to the 1980s and more than one-half of all the uranium used by the United States for its weapons program; and

WHEREAS, the mining and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department has identified two hundred fifty-nine uranium mining sites in New Mexico, of which

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1 one hundred thirty-seven show no record of reclamation; and

2 WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation has over one thousand abandoned  
3 uranium mines; and

4 WHEREAS, the Pueblo of Laguna was the site of the world's  
5 largest open-pit uranium mine, known as the Jackpile mine; and

6 WHEREAS, uranium mining and milling has left a legacy of  
7 contaminated air, land and water; and

8 WHEREAS, former miners and millers suffer health impacts  
9 as a result of working in these unsafe, contaminated  
10 conditions; and

11 WHEREAS, in 1979, Church Rock, New Mexico, was the site of  
12 the worst nuclear disaster in the United States when more than  
13 ninety-four million gallons of radioactive waste emptied into  
14 the local water system, releasing three times more radiation  
15 than the Three Mile Island incident; and

16 WHEREAS, communities next to the Homestake mill uranium  
17 tailings pile in Cibola county are exposed to radiation more  
18 than eighteen times the level accepted as safe for human  
19 exposure by the United States environmental protection agency;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, cancer, miscarriages, birth defects, kidney  
22 disease, hypertension and autoimmune diseases are more  
23 prevalent among people who live closer to mine waste sites; and

24 WHEREAS, indigenous peoples have a significant and  
25 spiritual connection to the land in the Grants mineral belt;

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1 and

2 WHEREAS, residents of the Grants mineral belt continue to  
3 be negatively impacted by past uranium mining and the continued  
4 legacy of contamination;

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
6 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department  
7 of health be requested to compile health data from existing  
8 environmental sources such as state and federal agencies,  
9 university research institutions, advocacy organizations,  
10 nonprofit environmental health organizations and state and  
11 federal research institutes to develop a health profile of  
12 communities within the Grants mineral belt, which would  
13 establish a baseline of the current health of communities in  
14 which mining and milling activities have been and may be  
15 permitted by the mining commission; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the health profile indicate  
17 levels or rates of cancer, birth defects, mental health  
18 problems and other maladies that health experts have associated  
19 with mining and milling activities; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of health  
21 propose to the mining commission and the department of  
22 environment conditions on mining permits that could mitigate  
23 the health consequences of mining and milling and help  
24 alleviate the continuing consequences of historical mining; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be

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1 transmitted to the secretary of health, the secretary of  
2 environment; the secretary of energy, minerals and natural  
3 resources; the chair of the mining commission; the governor;  
4 the chair of the United States nuclear regulatory commission;  
5 the administrators for regions 6 and 9 of the environmental  
6 protection agency; the regional forester, southwest region,  
7 United States forest service; and the New Mexico congressional  
8 delegation.