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A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMUNITY LEADER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE JUAN JOSÉ PEÑA.

WHEREAS, Juan José Peña, a recognized community leader and civil rights advocate from Las Vegas, New Mexico, died on June 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was born in Hagerman, New Mexico on December 13, 1945, and his family moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico when Mr. Peña was a child; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña graduated from Robertson high school in 1964, where he played football, wrestled and competed in track and field events; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña received bachelor of arts and masters degrees from New Mexico highlands university, where he studied Spanish, literature and political science; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña played football for New Mexico highlands university and played semiprofessional ice hockey for what was then the Highlands hawks; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from college, Mr. Peña was drafted and served in the United States army during the Vietnam conflict from 1969 to 1970; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Peña received numerous decorations, including the bronze star medal for valor, and Mr. Peña was the most dedicated member of the fourth infantry division

1 when it returned to the United States; and

2 WHEREAS, from 1972 to 1978, Mr. Peña served as a Spanish  
3 professor, coordinator of ethnic studies and director and  
4 professor of Chicano studies and professor of bilingual  
5 education at New Mexico highlands university; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was a linguistics expert who spoke  
7 multiple languages, including English, Spanish, German,  
8 Portuguese, French and Vietnamese; and

9 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña worked as a supervisory interpreter  
10 for the United States district court for the district of  
11 New Mexico, retired after two decades of interpreting in 2005  
12 and continued to work as a freelance interpreter after his  
13 retirement; and

14 WHEREAS, in 1995, while working as an interpreter,  
15 Mr. Peña met his partner of twenty-three years, Ann Tran,  
16 when he drove her to court to interpret for a Vietnamese  
17 defendant; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña and Ann Tran were always by each  
19 other's side to offer love and support; and

20 WHEREAS, from his college days on, Mr. Peña was a  
21 humanitarian, an activist and a warrior who represented the  
22 people; and

23 WHEREAS, Mr. Peña fought for the disadvantaged and  
24 disenfranchised and spoke for many who did not have a voice;  
25 and

1           WHEREAS, during his tenure at New Mexico highlands  
2 university, Mr. Peña served as an organizer and leader for el  
3 partido de la raza unida de Nuevo Mexico; and

4           WHEREAS, in 1976, Mr. Peña rose to become the national  
5 president of el partido de la raza unida national congreso de  
6 aztlan and met with world leaders such as Mexico's president,  
7 Vicente Fox, and Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine  
8 liberation organization; and

9           WHEREAS, in his leadership roles, Mr. Peña often met  
10 with the "big four of the movimiento" - Cesar Chavez, Reies  
11 Lopez Tijerina, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and José Ángel  
12 Gutiérrez; and

13           WHEREAS, Mr. Peña also served as commander of local  
14 branches of the American GI forum, was active in the disabled  
15 American veterans and veterans of foreign wars organizations  
16 and was a founding member, chair and vice-chair of the  
17 Hispano round table; and

18           WHEREAS, Mr. Peña's tireless advocacy earned him  
19 numerous honors, including the city of Albuquerque human  
20 rights award; and

21           WHEREAS, of all the issues Mr. Peña was invested in, he  
22 was most proud of the work he did to benefit veterans'  
23 causes, feeling that veterans had risked their lives and did  
24 not receive the help and support they deserved when returning  
25 home; and

1           WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was also an author who wrote numerous  
2 scholarly papers, short stories and poetry, many of which  
3 related to the history of Chicanos in the southwest,  
4 historical figures of the southwest and life in Chicano  
5 families; and

6           WHEREAS, Mr. Peña was preceded in death by his only son,  
7 Federico Peña; and

8           WHEREAS, Mr. Peña is survived by his partner, Ann Tran;  
9 his brother, Fernando Peña; his daughter, Margarita Aguilar  
10 and his grandchildren, Shar and Mariana;

11           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE  
12 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that Juan José Peña be honored for his  
13 accomplishments as a community leader and civil rights  
14 advocate; and

15           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be  
16 transmitted to the family of Juan José Peña. \_\_\_\_\_