SENATE MEMORIAL 83

50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2011

INTRODUCED BY

Mary Jane M. Garcia

A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE LAS CRUCES FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE FIREFIGHTERS AND CREW INVOLVED IN THE "VECINO" PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the Las Cruces fire department operates a program, which serves as a lifeline to many homebound individuals with no relatives in the area, called the "Vecino" program; and

WHEREAS, the program involves firefighters and crew making daily phone calls to check on the health and well-being of the individuals involved in the program; and

WHEREAS, the program got its start in the spring of 1995, when a call was received in fire station No. 1 from a woman who was worried about her elderly neighbor whose light was on at 4:00 a.m.; and

WHEREAS, upon responding to the call, the firefighter
discovered an elderly woman, unconscious and having suffered serious blood loss due to an injury; and

WHEREAS, when the woman recovered from her injuries, the firefighter made a telephone call to her to check in on her, and that call was the beginning of the Vecino program; and

WHEREAS, the program expanded as firefighters were transferred from one station to another, initiating the phone calls at their new stations; and

WHEREAS, the Vecino program now serves more than thirty-five individuals; and

WHEREAS, phone calls are made daily, three hundred sixty-five days a year, usually around 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., taking from ten to thirty minutes to complete a round of calls; and

WHEREAS, according to Lieutenant Mark Olson, who has headed the Vecino program for the last two years, the firefighters find the phone calls both rewarding and frustrating, aware that they are making an important difference in the lives of lonely people, but recognizing that their needs often far exceed the firefighters' ability to address them; and

WHEREAS, many firefighters have established personal relationships with the individuals they call, involving them in family events or visiting them at their homes; and

WHEREAS, the program was named "Vecino" after the Spanish word for neighbor, and the firefighters and crew of the Las Cruces fire department are certainly serving as neighbors to
people who otherwise would have no one to talk to on a daily basis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Las Cruces fire department and the firefighters and crew involved in the Vecino program be honored; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be transmitted to Lieutenant Mark Olson, station No. 5, for distribution to all the firefighters and crew who participate in this valuable community service.

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