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SENATE MEMORIAL 99

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

INTRODUCED BY

Mary Kay Papen

A MEMORIAL

COMMENDING THE LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS OF TOLERANCE, INCLUSION  
AND INTERFAITH HARMONY IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN.

WHEREAS, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a staunch ally and  
partner of the United States in a strategically important south  
Caucasus region bordering Iran, Russia, Turkey and Central  
Asia; and

WHEREAS, having ancient traditions of tolerance and  
inclusion, Azerbaijan offers an environment where Muslims, Jews  
and Christians enjoy peaceful coexistence and live in dignity  
and harmony and with respect for each other; and

WHEREAS, Azerbaijan was home to one of the earliest  
Christian nations in the world; and

WHEREAS, the Christian community has helped to shape  
Azerbaijan's history through the ages, and today, this

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1 community remains an important and vibrant part of Azerbaijani  
2 culture and society; and

3 WHEREAS, living alongside the Christian and Muslim  
4 communities is a thriving Jewish community of about thirty  
5 thousand people that also has a long heritage in Azerbaijan,  
6 dating back more than two thousand years; and

7 WHEREAS, over the centuries, when Jews in the surrounding  
8 regions found themselves persecuted, Azerbaijan was a haven for  
9 them, and during World War II, many European Jews escaping Nazi  
10 persecution found shelter in Azerbaijan; and

11 WHEREAS, the Jewish community has been an integral part of  
12 Azerbaijan's economic, cultural and political life, and today,  
13 synagogues and Jewish schools flourish in the country; and

14 WHEREAS, it is no coincidence that Azerbaijan is one of  
15 the few secular countries with a predominately Muslim  
16 population that maintains close, friendly ties with the state  
17 of Israel; and

18 WHEREAS, the three major religions have prospered not only  
19 because of the age-old respect and tolerance of the Azerbaijani  
20 people, but also because of the important role the government  
21 of the Republic of Azerbaijan has played in constantly  
22 fostering an environment of tolerance, mutual acceptance and  
23 respect in the country; and

24 WHEREAS, since the very beginning of its independence,  
25 Azerbaijan has created an environment that nurtures and

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1 promotes the ancient traditions of tolerance and rejects  
2 radicalism, extremism and hatred; and

3 WHEREAS, Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's  
4 great strengths and virtues and has worked to ensure that this  
5 diversity continues to blossom; and

6 WHEREAS, Azerbaijan has recently built and rebuilt  
7 churches and synagogues and has created new cultural centers  
8 for different faiths and has supported all three religions  
9 financially without discrimination, all the while making sure  
10 that Christians and Jews are represented in all three branches  
11 of the government in Azerbaijan; and

12 WHEREAS, Azerbaijan has repeatedly, over the course of the  
13 last decade, brought together religious leaders from the region  
14 and from around the world to promote interfaith dialogue,  
15 providing an example that is sorely needed; and

16 WHEREAS, in May 2015, Azerbaijan will host the third world  
17 forum on intercultural dialogue; and

18 WHEREAS, the United States has an interest in such a  
19 success story, since Azerbaijan – secular, tolerant, and  
20 inclusive – is crucial to a region ridden with hatred and  
21 strife; and

22 WHEREAS, given the rising levels of radicalism, terrorism,  
23 hate, xenophobia and intolerance in the world, it is important  
24 for the United States to support its tolerant and secular  
25 friends, and it considers the Azerbaijani model of interfaith

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1 acceptance and community engagement as a functioning example  
2 and encourages this policy around the world;

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
4 OF NEW MEXICO that it recognize and commend the long-standing  
5 traditions of tolerance and inclusion in Azerbaijan and commend  
6 the efforts by Azerbaijan to foster interfaith harmony, which  
7 can be a model and functioning example in these troubled times;  
8 and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
10 transmitted to the president of the United States, the United  
11 States secretary of state, the United States ambassador to the  
12 Republic of Azerbaijan, the president pro tempore of the United  
13 States senate, the speaker of the United States house of  
14 representatives and New Mexico's congressional delegation.